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# The Passion of Labour +

By Robert Lynd

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YORK HOUSE, PORTUGAL ST., LONDON, W.C.

TO

A. G. GARDINER

WITH WHOM LIBERTY IS A PASSION, AND EQUALITY  
AND FRATERNITY ARE HABITS.





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*These appeals to reason have all appeared in "The New Statesman," except one, which was published in "The Venturer."*

# The Passion of Labour

## I

### *The Passion of Labour*

**L**ABOUR in politics has but one passion. It is to make the world a better place for the people who inhabit it. More narrowly, it is to make one's own country a better place for the people who inhabit it. This, it may be said, does not differ from the professed object of any other political party. If we examine the record of the orthodox political parties, however, we shall find that they have been exceedingly philosophic in their acceptance of the present state of society. They have not realised that this world of mean streets and mean ideals in which we live is no less intolerable as a permanent home for human beings than was the mud-and-blood world of the trenches. They have never admitted that it is as necessary and as possible to release human beings from poverty as it is to release them from war. They are undoubtedly anxious to temper poverty to the shorn wage-earner. But they do not wish to abolish poverty utterly. They even have a notion that to wish to abolish poverty is

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grossly materialistic. It is, no doubt, materialistic in the sense in which it is materialistic to attempt to abolish famine or sleeping sickness or influenza or syphilis. But, strange to say, no politician ever calls the heroes of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine materialists. "Materialist" is a name reserved for those who desire to abolish the disease of diseases—which is poverty. All human beings are, of course, materialists in a great proportion of their undertakings—the farmer ploughing his field, the builder among his bricks, the cook in the kitchen. Civilisation could not exist unless we were willing to turn ourselves into materialists of this kind. In politics, again, the Protectionist is one kind of materialist, the Free Trader is another. The materialism of Labour differs from the materialism of the old-fashioned happy-go-lucky politics only in this—that Labour wishes to make use of the wealth produced by human hands and brains in order to purchase an equal chance of health, comfort, education, and adventure for every citizen of the State. The politicians of the past have been content to relieve poverty in so far as the more luxurious classes felt they could afford to do so without sensibly interfering with their habits of life. Labour contends that we have got beyond a stage of social organisation in which men with a plurality of houses and a retinue of servants can be permitted to say that we cannot afford to rescue the children of the slums, and to feed, clothe, and educate them on the understanding that all men are peers.

The war taught us many great lessons in equality. It taught us that, if there was a shortage of beef and butter, the reasonable way to meet the shortage was not

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to allow the rich to compete against the poor for possession of the food supply, but that the State should step in and insist that every citizen, rich and poor, should be entitled to an equal share of these things, and that possession of money should not give any man a right to more than his fair share of the essential foods. Had the food question been left to be settled by competition, by the laws of supply and demand, and by the processes blessed by Victorian economists, we should have seen all the beef and butter and margarine and sugar put by the profiteers at the disposal of the rich, and it can hardly be doubted that a revolution would have broken out. The British Government, by introducing the coupon system, and saying practically, "You shall have beef and margarine and sugar, not because you are rich, but because you are a citizen," took a great and instructive step in the direction of Socialism. Every other consideration, it was realised, must be postponed to the needs of national defence. The people of the country were regarded as a besieged garrison, and the Government did not hesitate to say to the millionaire, "You shall not eat meat twice a day while there is a single citizen in want." No, it did not actually go so far as that. It ensured to the poorest citizen the liberty to buy meat, not the power to buy meat. Still, the rationing system introduced at least the thin end of the wedge of equality. It deprived the richer citizen of the right to protest, "No, no ; I cannot afford to give up ten or twelve meat meals a week. If you make me do so, you will only be killing the goose that lays the golden egg." The food shortage brought men face to face with realities, and they had no time to listen to fables.

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They realised that the citizens of these islands were threatened by a grim equilibrium of hunger, and the old economics of inequality suddenly seemed to be as mad and inconsequent as a neuropath's dream. The Government unquestionably diluted our equality as they diluted our beer. But at least they did establish the principle that a human being's rights as regards the necessities of life should be measured by his needs rather than by his banking account.

Labour calls for the perpetuation and development of the equalities of war-time. It does not proclaim a class-war any more than Lord Rhondda proclaimed a class-war when he introduced the coupon system. It is moved by no ignoble jealousy of riches and comfort. All that it contends is that a nation can afford anything except a chronic plague of poverty, and that, if it were true (as certain reactionaries affirm) that there is not enough comfort to go round, then it would be the duty of the State to ration comfort as it has rationed sugar. For before the interests of any individual citizen come the interests of national defence. In a nation at war national defence means defence against foreign enemies. In a nation at peace it means defence against those more permanently dangerous enemies—ignorance, poverty, and ill-health. The cost of defending the citizens in the mass from these three enemies should be a first charge on the national wealth. Many rich men expressed their willingness to spend their last shilling in order to defeat the Germans. Labour insists that we should also be ready to spend our last shilling in order to make an end of poverty and ignorance.

It will be the test of the sincerity of the protestations

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made by the governing classes during the war whether they now accept the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity in their full applications, and are ready to make them the basis of a new social order. Men are no longer content with an equality that means merely an equal right to vote. Equality in the popular imagination is slowly coming to mean an equal right to send one's son to the University, to send one's children to the sea-side for a month's holiday, to live in a house of one's own with a garden, to travel abroad, to go to the opera, to drink wine if one likes it, to wear comfortable boots—in other words, to be as cultured, as fully entitled to leisure, and even as luxurious as one's neighbour. Clearly, it is possible to desire equality of this sort through simple greed. There is nothing essentially noble in wishing to have a good time. There is, however, I think, something noble in wishing one's children to have a good time and in wishing one's fellow-countrymen, most of whom one has never even seen, to have a good time. And Labour wishes more than that. It wishes men and women to have a good chance. It sees that men and women are spiritually enchained by the material circumstances of poverty, and it suspects that the excessive mortality among the children of the poor is a mortality of soul and mind as well as of body. It admits that the idleness of the idle rich may be as spiritually degrading as the poverty of the industrious poor. But it does not propose to establish a world in which everybody will be idle and rich. All it seeks is a world in which every citizen shall have a fair chance of all-round development. It seems a ludicrous thing to many people to suggest that a social system is perfectly



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possible in which one might find oneself sitting beside one's cook or one's dustman in a stall at Covent Garden during a performance of *Tristan*. As a matter of fact, the inconceivable thing is that anybody should find this inconceivable. By what right do any of us claim to doom our fellow human beings to a musicless, illiterate, untravelled life? If God conceded the dustman an immortal soul, is it not a little presumptuous in a mere man to question his right to sit in a stall at the opera? Certainly, we shall have to adjust our imaginations to odder things than this during the coming century. Civilisation, with all its enrichments, has hitherto been possible only for a tiny section of the human race. We need not complain of this. It was nobody's fault. We may put it down with a good conscience to the laws governing the evolution of human society. We may justly complain, however, of those who would impede the progress of this evolution, and attempt still to confine the blessings of civilisation to a section of the race. Our object should be to extend as fast as is humanly possible the boundaries of civilisation so that every man shall be in the ordinary sense of the word a gentleman, with all the liberties and opportunities of a gentleman. Labour does not propose to compel any man to go and see Shakespeare who had rather go to a horse-race, or to force him to travel in Italy if he had rather sit on the Palace Pier at Brighton. But it is appalling that there should be people who actually dislike the idea of a world in which he had full liberty of choice.

Labour differs from the other parties, we may take it, then, in setting out with the determination to multiply the opportunities of life instead of the opportunities of



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exploitation. Hitherto, in trade and industry, society has thought first of all of the opportunities of the exploiters. Openings for capital have meant more to it than openings for human happiness. Citizen felt justified in exploiting citizen, nation in exploiting nation. Capitalism and Imperialism became holy words with a magic power of deafening the ears even of good men to the cries of the multitude of victims. Labour is in insurrection against this superstition of words. It declares that the exploitation of one human being by another, or of one nation by another, must end, and that the aim of politics should be the increase of the sum of culture, opportunity, and happiness, and its rational distribution among men and women. Naturally, many men will be found to defend the present order. Cannibals, I fancy, are perfectly content that they, too, have reached a fortunate stage of society. Labour believes that it is possible for human society to advance almost as far beyond its present European level as its present culture is beyond the culture of the cannibals of Tropical Africa. It does not pretend that we shall be able to accomplish this in a day. It proclaims, however, that the day has come for us to begin marching.

## II

### *Labour and the Middle Classes*

**H**ISTORIANS who look back on the election of 1918 will, it is probable, select as one of its most remarkable features the entry of the middle classes (or at least of a fair proportion of middle-class men and women) into the ranks of Labour. It used to be made a charge against the Labour Party that it was not a "national" party, but merely stood for the interests of a class, being thus distinguished from the Liberal and Tory parties, which were notoriously free from class prejudice. At present, it appears, the Labour Party is guilty of something still worse. If it at one time lost its claim to be a "national" party owing to its exclusion of the middle classes, it has now lost its claim to be a "labour" party owing to its inclusion of the middle classes. That is the traditional method of controversy in electioneering. The political controversialist has always been a person who insisted on having it both ways. His chief object is to condemn his opponent. He is a student of the fine art of misrepresentation. He will find a reason for denouncing an opponent for having brown hair, or for having black hair, or for having red hair, or for having yellow hair, or for having no hair

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at all. Even if you dyed your hair green, like Baudelaire, you could not satisfy him. The wolf is determined to make a meal of the lamb, and whatever he says about the lamb merely means that he is hungry. Arguments, like dreams, need an interpreter; and if some Freud would apply himself to the work, he would find, I imagine, that a suppressed wish is usually somewhere in the background. The great suppressed wish of the reactionaries is to keep the middle classes and the working classes from learning the truth about the Labour Party. Hence the argument that the Labour Party is a Bolshevik party will be used to the middle classes, and the argument that the Labour Party is a bourgeois party will be used to the workers. The Labour Party is, of course, neither of these things, but that does not matter to the reactionary controversialist. He is a believer in exploitation, and he is determined to do all in his power to obscure the fact that the Labour Party is first and foremost a party bent upon putting an end to exploitation. We have now reached a stage at which the quarrel between the exploiters and the exploited has become the central issue of politics. The Labour Party is obtaining an immense amount of middle-class support because the middle classes are beginning to find out at last that they, too, belong to the great army of the exploited—that their interests lie in the approach to a new form of society in which there shall no longer be either exploiters or exploited, but every man shall be at once a worker, a bourgeois and a peer, enjoying opportunities of a more abundant and richer life than we now dream of. Who would not rather be a modern English working-man than the most

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aristocratic chief of a head-hunting tribe in Borneo ? I have no doubt that the equal citizen of the world which is going to be built on the ideals of Labour will look back on our present stage of civilisation with as little envy as we, for our part, feel when we read of the noblest and most exclusive families in Borneo. He will certainly not envy the working-man of the present day ; he will not envy even the Duke of Westminster or Sir Thomas Lipton. He will see that we all lived in a grimy world which from his point of view was not fit to live in. He will, no doubt, have his own quarrel with circumstances and dream of a still better society than he has yet attained. But a candidate at an election in the year 2918 A.D. who proposed to go back to the merry England of the twentieth century would, I am confident, not get twenty votes even in Belgravia.

One thing that has attracted many middle-class men and women to Labour, then, is the knowledge that a new order of society is coming, and the belief that it can only come peacefully if Labour assumes the responsibilities of practical politics. The new world can be built stably only by those who desire a new world. Those who in their hearts prefer the present order are bound to make a bad job of building something better. It is as impossible to build a new order of society in a grudging spirit as it would be to write *Hamlet* in a grudging spirit. I can understand the point of view of the man who says " Might is right," " The Devil take the hindmost," and frankly accepts all the other pithy and proverbial statements of what we have come to regard as the Prussian gospel of competition. But I cannot understand the point of view

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of those who really want a better world, but would prefer that it should be built by profiteers and the friends of profiteers. And some of those who are now offering to reconstruct the world would cut as droll a figure as the most portly profiteer, should they be permanently entrusted with the work of building the new society. There is Lord Chaplin, for instance. One does not blame him : he has not the imagination to conceive the kind of world of which men are now dreaming, any more than he has the imagination to paint the Sistine Madonna. Lord Birkenhead—frankly, would one trust Lord Birkenhead to reconstruct a hen-house ? And if one climbs a little higher and considers the leaders, is not Mr. Bonar Law a man much more likely to do his best to save us from the new world than to help us to arrive there ? He has never uttered a syllable to suggest that he has renounced the gospel of inverted Bolshevism to which he clung with such passionate stupidity on the eve of the war. He is simply a conspirator of violence who lay low for the duration of the war : as a guide to Utopia, he is like a man who knows neither the direction, the distance, nor the language of the port to which he invites us to travel under his captaincy. He has neither compass nor helm. One might as well go to sea in a bowl with the wise men of Gotham as begin the voyage to the country of good hope under such a leader. Nor has Mr. Lloyd George shown himself a whit more clear as to the destination to which he would fain guide us. He has on board a magnificent freight of vague phrases, no doubt, but as to whether they mean that he is in sympathy with President Wilson or with Sir Edward Carson, with duke

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or with docker, no man—probably not even himself—knoweth. Not to know where you are going, indeed, is apparently the acid test whether you are fit to belong to the Coalition Government. One must not be unfair to the Coalition, however. I have no doubt whatever that the Coalition is doing its best to go full steam ahead. But I am equally convinced that it is also doing its best to go full speed astern. The result will either be a standstill or that something will give way in the machinery. One would not take a ticket even to Margate on so crazily-run a craft. Nothing but exasperation, frustration, and disgust can come of it. We can, as has been said, only achieve a better world in association with men who desire a better world with all their hearts. It will be no easy achievement, and all the intelligence, all the good-will, and all the energy of men and women will be needed even to accomplish the first stage of the journey without disaster. For the middle classes to hesitate and to leave the direction of the future to the passions of red reactionaries on the one hand and red revolutionaries on the other can result in nothing but bringing ruin both on themselves and on their country. Labour in politics means safety. If only the doctors and farmers and shopkeepers and clerks and civil servants and professional classes generally realised this, there would be few men and women outside the ranks of the Labour Party except those who frankly believe in profiteering.

Surely, no sane man can look at the position of affairs in Europe generally and in these islands without realising that great changes are coming. The only question is whether we can bring them about peaceably and justly, or whether they will be left to work themselves



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out in a muddle of bitterness and violence. Out of an age of peace we have suddenly found ourselves in an age of violence, and only the rallying of the wisdom and generosity of every class among the citizens can save us from the spread of the sinister doctrine that all questions are capable of violent solutions. The middle classes stand to lose as much as any other class—if not more—by the spread of the spirit of violence and class war. They are a class whose interests will always be sacrificed by the profiteers. They have in matters of taxation invariably been sacrificed to the interests of the very rich. They, as much as anyone else, suffered during the war in order to make up the excess profits of the very few. And they have as little to gain from violent revolution as from greedy reaction. They and their children can be sure of a fair chance in the world only in a society at once (if it is not paradoxical to suggest such a thing) stable and progressive. I can understand a member of the middle classes not overburdened with idealism or even disinterestedness saying that he would prefer a world in which things would remain as they are. But there is no more chance of things remaining as they are than there is of the man in the moon appearing next week on the stage of the Empire Theatre. Hence the middle-class man will do well to become a realist and to ask himself how he and his children and other men's children are likely to weather happily the great changes that are coming. They cannot do it in an atmosphere charged with suspicious malignity and cant. The great question of how human beings can live cheerfully and peaceably together in an equal world cannot be solved without an immense effort of good-will. And good-will

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will have to be constant, not merely hand-to-mouth good-will. The co-operation of the mind of the middle classes and the mind of the working classes in bringing about a better world is possible only if good-will is made the first principle of public life. I do not mean good-will at twenty per cent. The profiteer who without giving up his profiteering calls on the working classes for his ration of good-will will, I am afraid, be sent away empty. On the other hand, there is not a single question either in these islands or in the world at large—the question of the League of Nations, disarmament, the levy on capital, equality of opportunity, Ireland, the nationalisation of mines and railways—which with a steady flow of genuine good-will cannot be settled as easily as a difference of opinion in an ordinary good-natured family. Well, good-will is not Mr. Lloyd George's strong point. Nor is it Mr. Bonar Law's. Nor is it Sir Edward Carson's. The Coalition is a party of the irritable and the irritating. It is a party destined to confusion as surely as the triumphant-seeming host that followed Lars Porsena of Clusium on his futile march to Rome. The middle classes can only support it in peril of breaking down the bridge that unites them in interest with the workers. That is why they should make haste to throw in their lot with Labour. The programme of Labour is a programme of national and international peace and good-will which ought to unite all good citizens in the task of clearing the way towards a new world that will justify the ringing of bells.



### III

#### *The Threatened Gentleman*

**M** PADEREWSKI was reported some time ago to have said that the Bolshevik revolution was a "war against the toothbrush." Whether the phrase is or is not applicable to what is going on in Eastern Europe I do not propose to discuss. It is a phrase worth noting, however, for it represents the fears of a great many people with regard to the tendencies of democracy, not only in Russia, but all over the civilised world. All the graces of life—manners, cleanliness, the arts—seem to the old-fashioned to be threatened by change. It is not possible, according to this view, for everybody to be a gentleman. It is all-important, therefore, they hold, to preserve the ring of gentlemen that already exists. Their imaginations can conceive no alternative to a limited club of gentlemen such as we have at present save having no gentlemen at all. If Socialists had their way, they think, there would be no gentlemen at all. Socialism appears to them to be largely an attempt to drag down the gentleman. Even Liberalism, when it commits itself to a tiny tax on land, is represented as aiming a blow at men of birth and breeding and exiling them from their estates. The

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finance of democracy, we are told, will not only drive capital out of the country ; it will drive civilisation out of the country. It will give us a land where the unwashed accumulate and gentility decays. One can appreciate the old-fashioned point of view. One may not agree with it, but who is able to contemplate without a mild sentiment of regret the disappearance of even the most cumbersome dynasty or aristocracy ? Who has not found himself sentimentally on the side of Hereward the Wake, of the Stuarts, of the French *émigrés*, of the Mohicans, of the slave-holders of the Southern States ? Who is not loyal in his imagination to the vanished races rather than to those that both succeed them and succeed ?

We instinctively feel that the race owes something to those who represented a long inheritance of courtesy and ease and high living. It would be easy to write a doctrinaire history in which every aristocrat would appear, not as the flower of human society, but as a tentacled parasite. But I, for one, cannot accept the parasitic view of history. Parasitism is not the leading fact in history any more than it is in botany. I do not deny that there has been an all but continuous tradition of parasitism in history, and that a class that may be useful in one century may become parasitic in the next. But it is conceivable that even the most absolute monarchies and the most tyrannous aristocracies have played a necessary part in the evolution of society. One cannot read Sir James Frazer without understanding something of the great part the institution of kingship played in raising men from the dulness of animals to the daring of individuals. Similarly the institutions of

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property and even of slavery, whatever view we may take of their place in the present world, did at one stage in the evolution of society enable the human race to take a great step upward. It was not possible at earlier stages in human history for all men to have leisure. Man was still ignorant, incapable of organisation, as we now interpret the word, a slave rather than a master of the forces of Nature. We are still, heaven knows, ignorant enough, and we have only reached the letter G in the alphabet of organisation, and Nature overthrows even the most cunning of us in the end. But even a modern Bachelor of Arts knows a great deal that Aristotle did not know ; and every time we put a match to a cigarette or speak over the telephone we reveal ourselves as the conquerors of Nature to an extent to which Alexander the Great never was. Hence it is reasonable to believe that the existence of a privileged class may at one time have been necessary in order to help a poor and ignorant world to rise slowly out of its poverty and ignorance. There are some people who decry the Athens of Pericles because its greatness was founded on slavery. This kind of censoriousness seems to me absurd. It may be doubted whether at that period of history the world could have produced an Athens without the slavery that was the necessary counterpart of civilised leisure. All men are born free, said the rosy idealists of the eighteenth century. It would be nearer the truth to say that all men are born slaves. The gentleman is simply the man who has become free. At first men became free only in small numbers. As knowledge and civilisation increased, the possibilities of freedom increased also. But they had

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not by the time of Pericles increased to such a point that it was possible for all the world to be free. In order that Athens might be free, it was probably necessary that some men should be slaves. We have now got well beyond that point in social evolution where slavery is either justifiable or necessary. We tell ourselves even that, if we were offered freedom at the price of the slavery of our fellow-creatures, our moral sense would spurn the gift. Let us not be self-righteous, however, at the expense of the ancestors of European civilisation. We, too, live in a world in which we easily find excuses for exploiting our fellows. It is not many years since a Cabinet Minister defended child-labour as the essential basis of one of our great industries. The moral sense, as well as the economic sense, of Europeans has begun to rebel against a doctrine so frightful. But it is not long since the moral sense of quite good men accepted it without feeling in the least uncomfortable.

Whether we like it or not, the gentleman of the past must always be seen against a background in which slaves or impoverished labourers or children in bondage are frequent figures. It may be open to question whether he has actually added to the miseries of his fellow-creatures ; it is undeniable that he has flourished at their expense. Had he not come into existence, it is possible that we might never have clambered above the social conditions of Australian aborigines. We might have shared an equality of misery without achieving an equality of freedom. The gentleman has come down through history, not merely annexing other people's lands and bodies and goods and labour, but contributing the arts and learning and the graces of life as an inheri-

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tance to the world at large. Many people will hold that he has been dear at the price. But to take this view too bitterly is to quarrel with Providence. We must be wary, on the other hand, in any interpretation of the will of Providence. Social conditions that may have been providential two or three thousand years ago may be a sin against the light to-day. The ancient world may not have possessed material resources sufficient to give every man the leisure to become a gentleman. Science, if we make a communal use of it, can provide us with those resources to-day. We are always talking about labour-saving machinery, but we have not yet fully realised that the proper definition of "labour-saving" is "leisure-giving." The discovery of machinery, reasonably applied, is simply the discovery of leisure; and the discovery of leisure is the discovery of gentlemen. I do not say that leisure of itself makes a gentleman, or even that a gentleman may not be in some circumstances a harder worker than a navvy. But he is none the less the product of a more or less leisured class and of the tastes of a leisured class. The intellectual, social, and domestic atmosphere in which he lives is the result of a long tradition of leisure. From a very early time the poor have instinctively felt that the day would come when every man would be able to claim a part in that tradition. If the patrician was a necessary figure in the evolution of society, so was the discontented plebs. Spartacus as well as the slave-master has helped to civilise us. Glorious as the gentleman was, the protest against the gentleman was still more glorious. For it sprang from the feeling, however unconscious, not that there were too many gentlemen, but that there

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were too few. It was an attack, not on gentility, but on the monopoly of gentility. The life of a gentleman, it was seen or half-seen, must one day be made possible for everybody. And that, as has been pointed out, is the vision and the desire that are the real cause of Labour unrest to-day. The rich need not be afraid that the poor are going to take away their toothbrushes. The poor may not yet have learned the value of toothbrushes, but they have learned to long for that leisured sort of world which leads to the use of toothbrushes. Not that the general extension of leisure is going to precipitate the world all at once as by a miracle into the Golden Age. Leisure merely gives opportunities. You have only to make a twenty-four hours' tour of the West End of London to see that half the leisured classes to-day do not even take the trouble to civilise themselves. The theatres are crowded, but compare the plays with the plays men went to see in the days of Pericles and in the days of Elizabeth. One would imagine that the world had reverted to barbarism. Here is a world in which the average gentleman never reads a poem, but lives in a dull house, amuses himself at an idiot theatre, takes his opinions from a "give-'em-hell" Press, and has less dignity of intellect and manners than a Tolstoyan peasant. Were it not that one knew that in their private lives most of these people are devoted to their wives, or their children, or somebody or other, there would be cause for the gloomiest reflections on the present condition of humanity. It is not merely that the poor have not succeeded in becoming gentlemen; it is that the gentlemen have not succeeded in becoming gentlemen. They have not the tastes or the education or the manners



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of gentlemen. They are centuries and centuries behind the Knights of the Round Table. We have been inclined during the last few years to take an optimistic view of the white man of the twentieth century. There is good reason for this optimism, provided it is not uncritical and self-satisfied. We have the right to be optimistic, however, only if we realise that we are nearer the bottom than the top of the ladder of civilisation. The plain fact is that we are not yet a world of gentlemen, and that in order to become so we shall have to provide ourselves with something more than tooth-brushes. It is possible for the rich man as well as the Bolshevik to betray civilisation. Contempt of the intellect, contempt of courtesy, contempt of the social sense—these are even more ruinous than contempt of soap and dentifrice. We are betrayed by what is false within. We need not only the science to produce wealth, and the philosophy to distribute it, but the art to use it. We have acquired the first to some extent, but we are still stammering over our infant lessons in the second and the third. The conception of the world as a community of equal and educated gentlemen is only beginning to dawn upon us outside fantastic fiction. It is the only conception by which redder sort of revolution can be finally defeated.

#### IV

### *The Working Man and his Sense of Duty*

**I** READ not long ago a letter from a correspondent who, though in general sympathy with the claims of Labour, is apparently afraid lest some working men may make it one of their chief aims to do as little work as possible. He does not resent the prospect of a short working day, but he resents the prospect of a lazy working day. He believes that many working men are preoccupied with the sense of their rights to such a point as to give no thought to their duties. They take no pleasure in their work save in drawing their pay. They are, in the slang phrase of the moment, slackers, giving their services as grudgingly as Caliban. If they have a sense of duty at all, it is only a vague sense of the duty of rebellion against those who seem to have a better time than themselves. But probably when they scamp their work they have not even this mildly moral end in view. They are simply self-indulgent, lazy ; more eager to take things easily than to make things well. Their ethics are to be found in the choruses of music-hall songs, not in psalms and hymns of the consecrated life.

I have never believed in basing the argument for a



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new social order on the view that the working man is perfect already. If he were, there would be no need for any sort of world but the present. The chief object of society is to produce as many noble human beings as possible ; and if all the workers were noble we might reasonably conclude that we had already arrived at Utopia. Hence indictments of the working classes need not depress us unduly. I hold that the present social order has a debasing influence on men and women in all classes ; and it is as important that this startling truth should be known in regard to the workers as in regard to the landlords, capitalists, lawyers, clergy, and shopkeepers. We are all victims of an entirely unnecessary scrimmage for the means of existence. We live in a state of rivalry and war in which man is embittered against man and class is alienated from class. We know how much in our private lives we are dependent for happiness on friendship ; but we have never allowed the spirit of friendship to transform our economic relationships. Friendship makes men equal. But we live in a world of inequalities as enemies. A nation is a friendship, someone said during the war. I fear he was an optimist. A nation will only become a friendship when it is no longer regarded as decent for a number of rich citizens to conspire to possess themselves of all the keys of the people's wealth—electric power stations, Government-built factories, tramways, railways, ships, and land. While this spirit of possessiveness is not only endured, but even glorified, by statesmen and clergymen, can we wonder that the gospel of the easy-going life should become popular ? The gospel of the easy-going life is merely the gospel of getting as much as possible

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for as little as possible. And what is that but the gospel of competition—the gospel that triumphed in the nineteenth century, and is still defended by many pillars of the State ?

Not that the vices of the poor can all be attributed to the competitive system. Human beings are born imperfect, and even under the best imaginable system the Devil—or whatever it is that tempts men—will still go about like a roaring lion. The struggle between good and evil that goes on in the human breast is an interminable condition of the kind of existence we possess on this planet. Even the saints and the sages cannot free themselves from it. Sir Thomas Browne complained that he grew worse, rather than better, as he grew older. Clement of Alexandria conceived a plane of virtue so exalted that the virtuous man should be sinless even in his dreams. But few men get within sight of this extreme virtue. We live within a little circle, and the centre of the circle is a large black spot called ego. Here is the origin of our greeds, our lusts, our laziness, our fears. When we see a working man who is idle or drunken or greedy, we may well pause to ask ourselves whether he is so in virtue (as we say) of his being a working man, or in virtue of his being a human being like ourselves. Has he any vices peculiar to his class ? Is his moral code different from that of the aristocrat or the burgess ? In nine cases out of ten, his imperfections will be found to be not class imperfections, but human imperfections. There are, I know, certain virtues which are commonly regarded as peculiarly aristocratic. We think of the military virtues especially as such—the keen sense of honour, coolness and endurance in the presence

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of danger. People tell us that the aristocrat is brought up to behave well in an emergency in a way in which the poor man is not, and they argue that the first-class passenger is less subject to panic than the steerage passenger when a ship is going down, and that the West End of London showed fewer signs of nerves in an air-raid than the East End. Every generalisation of this kind, however, can be accepted only with the greatest caution. The war showed us men of all classes performing amazing feats of valour—the sailor born in a slum, the engineer turned airman, the peasant turned soldier, no less than the peer's son or the millionaire. The habit of self-control, no doubt, is commoner in those classes in which boys have been nurtured in a school of self-command and honour. But it is all a matter of degree. No class was called on in vain for a demonstration of the virtues. Human beings as a whole gave the lie to the maligner and the pessimist.

Those who censure the working classes, however, omit as a rule from their censure working men who fight. It is only working men who work, apparently, that fall short. The working man, it is said, does not throw himself into his work as his father and his grandfather did. He does not put his back into the day's job, but goes in for a policy of "ca' canny." There is no kind of worker who, in the estimation of critics, is so superlative a type of the new vices as the domestic servant. There was a time, we are told, when domestic servants worked as though work were the chief end of life, and took more pride in cooking, dusting, and polishing than in hats and high-heeled shoes. They worked in the spirit of retainers. They were obedient, thorough, dutiful.

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They regarded a mistress not as a task-mistress, but as the head of a household of which it was their good fortune to be members. No doubt the picture of the old-time servant is painted in ideal colours ; but there can be no denying that discontent has come into the kitchen, and cooks and housemaids " are not what they used to be." The desire for freedom has not only given them a keener love of leisure ; it has also done something to take the place of the earlier love of good work. It is no use pretending that this is altogether a good thing ; but neither is it any use pretending that the devotion to " duty " of the old-fashioned servant was altogether a good thing. It made her a perfect servant, perhaps, but it prevented her from becoming a perfect human being. She did not live a life of her own. She allowed herself to be enthralled by her service as no human being ought to be enthralled. A disturbing sense of her rights was needed in order to free not only herself, but her children and her children's children.

Labour in politics neither idealises nor apologises for the slovenliness of any human being. The restriction of output it defends in certain circumstances where it is not the result of indolence, but is the only way to prevent sweating. Even in the latter circumstances, however, there is no excuse for scamping or laziness. The best man in any class is he who, whatsoever his hand finds to do, does it with all his might. That is a commonplace of morality, and the lazy house-painter, the patchwork plumber, the careless needlewoman, no more deserves a statue than the bad landlord or the dishonest grocer. At the same time, the standard of honesty among the workers is probably a great deal

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higher than is generally realised. We hear occasionally of the wickedness of the Clyde, but if the workers of the Clyde are such shocking characters, how comes it that they build those strong and enduring ships? Go through one industry after another and you will find in it evidence of a far from contemptible average of honesty of labour. The war lowered the quality of most things, but before the war one's hats and clothes and boots were manifestly not the work of idlers and cheats. The theory of an indolent working class will not hold water. Any-one who has mixed much with the workers must have marvelled at the extent to which the sense of duty has survived rather than at the extent to which it has disappeared. Undoubtedly, the man who regards the workers as mere instruments of labour, and grudges them every moment in which they are not slaving to produce wealth for their more fortunate fellows, will find even the most diligent gang of labourers lazy. He has so high an ideal of labour for other people that no man could live up to it without killing himself. It must be remembered that the workers were always denounced for greed and laziness when they demanded any improvement in pay or working hours. Short-sighted employers did not realise that greed and laziness of this kind actually made the men more efficient workers. Someone once wrote a book called *Blessed be Drudgery*, and it may be that drudgery has its good side. But this is only the drudgery of the fairly comfortable home. The drudgery of unskilled labour is not an aid to the spiritual life. We might as reasonably call down a blessing on slavery. Sentiments of this kind are only tolerable as a reaction against the tendency to claim all

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the rights of man and disown all his duties. On the other hand, it is difficult with an honest face to preach the duties of man to those who have been cheated out of their rights.

What chiefly alarms many people, however, in regard to Labour is the fear that the worker lacks the sense of duty, not so much in private affairs as in public affairs. The worker in politics, they think, will be less public-spirited than the landlord, the lawyer, and the businessman. I will not deny that overwork and underpay may narrow a man's views on public matters. But I am inclined to think that in the past public spirit has in most human beings meant class spirit. The English land-system is simply the result of the seizure of political power by the landlords. Free Trade, though there was also a humane impulse behind it, was largely the result of the need of the *bourgeoisie*, which had become powerful in politics, for cheap raw materials. How little public spirit human beings have outside the interests of their class is shown by the fact that Members of Parliament do not take the trouble to attend an important debate on the future of India. The people who are most interested in Mesopotamia, apart from a few travellers, are those who are looking for an opportunity to invest money in developing its resources. We all long and pray for disinterestedness in politics, but we have only to read history to learn how rare it has been. Even Burke, for all his philosophy, was preoccupied with the interests of class. He defended profiteering as John Bright defended adulteration and child labour. We may admit that the gradual disappearance of the worst forms of child labour is the result of disinterested



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public spirit. But what a fight public spirit has to wage against the interests at every turn ! How it always has to compromise ! There is never an education measure or a health measure proposed that the private interests do not exact their three-quarters of a pound of flesh. On the whole, I fancy the worker as he achieves political power may be trusted to show as much public spirit as the upper and middle classes have shown. Obviously, without greatly improved education, he is as unlikely to produce a Mazzini as a Milton. But neither his congresses nor his papers suggest that he lacks interest in the world outside his private interests. The eagerness, indeed, with which he will discuss and pass resolutions on everything that happens, from Chicago to Thibet, suggests that his chief danger is not in being a self-seeker but a doctrinaire. And a doctrinaire is simply a public-spirited man with whose public spirit one does not agree and who wants to thrust it into everything. He has, like Broadbent, a sense of duty to Macedonia. He is so public-spirited as to be an internationalist. That, and not his laziness or his greed, is what chiefly alarms his enemies. He not only "ca's canny," but he dreams of a new world.

## *The Importance of Working like a Nigger*

**I**T has been maintained that in all ages human beings have hated two things more than anything else—working and fighting. Man was born lazy and peaceable. He only works in order to be able to idle. He only fights in order to be able to live at peace. There are, it cannot be denied, men who cannot help working and others who cannot help fighting. It is their genius or doom. But the mass of men do not share these restless passions. They prefer a life of modest ease. One thinks of the literature of the Heroic Age as a literature of men who loved fighting for its own sake. But, when we read Homer, we find how mistaken a view this is. The rank and file of the Greeks did not in the least wish to make war on Troy. We find them, at the first suggestion of a “defeatist” orator, eager to hurry down to the beach and embark for home. They took exactly the same attitude to war that the Russian soldier astonished some people by taking after the Revolution. The passion for fighting for fighting’s sake is so rare that it is taken for granted that no army could hold together except under the pressure of an iron discipline which threatens penalties more terrifying than war itself. The general dislike



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of fighting may be seen in the fact that soldiers always do their best to delude themselves with the hope that the war on which they are engaged will be a short war. Even those realists who refuse to be deluded find no pleasure in the thought that the end is not in sight. If they "stick it," in the popular phrase, they do so as Stoics, not as Epicureans. They, too, would like to be aboard the ships that would take them back to their wives, their children, and their country. The popularity of "blighty" wounds during the late war was notorious. Men may love victory; but they are willing to fight for it only as a desperate necessity. The love of being a winner is a far more widespread passion than pugnacity. Pugnacity is only a by-product.

As for work, does not our very religion show how we hate it? We read in the Bible that it came into the world as a punishment and a curse. Had Adam never sinned, he would have been a lazy and immortal vagabond. The Garden of Eden and Paradise are, in the popular imagination, the one a green, the other a golden, haven of idleness. If we praise work, then, it is not because we regard it as the best of all possible things in the best of all possible worlds. We regard it rather as an inevitable burden. It is the last resource of fallen man. It would be difficult to prove that in itself it is any more ennobling than indolence. Excessive labour, it may even be, is brutalising in its effects in a way in which excessive indolence is not. There is, I am aware, a grave moral objection to indolence. But this objection arises not from any theory of the ideal beauty of work but from the fact that in this world, rolling along under the shadow of Adam's curse, no man can be indolent

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without escaping his share of the general burden. He becomes a shirker and lives at the expense of his neighbours. Men, women, and children have to go without a little luxury, perhaps even without necessities, in order to support him in his idleness. He offends the sense of justice which tells us that all men should contribute equally out of their energies to the common fund of labour. We have no more right to avoid working than to avoid paying taxes. We may not be particularly enthusiastic about either work or taxes; but an enthusiastic sense of equality may at least carry us through. "Work," said Carlyle, "is the grand cure of all the maladies and miseries that ever beset mankind." Frankly, I doubt it. It did not even cure Carlyle of indigestion. Had work been all that was needed, we should long ago have got back into Paradise. It is a melancholy fact that work of some sorts may even add to the maladies and miseries of mankind. A man may work hard at making pills for poisoners or bombs for anarchists, to name only two of a multitude of reprehensible activities. One may be industrious to the detriment of one's fellows no less than to their gain. Hence, if I join in the praise of work, it is not because I have faith in it as the rosy remedy of a quack-doctor of society. It is because I see no other way of paying the unreckonable debt bequeathed to us by Adam. Someone has to pay it. It cannot be repudiated by the human race in general without an immediate collapse into ruin. And what the race cannot repudiate, the individual member of the race has no right to repudiate. A Thoreau or a Stevenson affords no precedent for idlers. Each of them did his full share of the work of his age.

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I have already referred to the complaints one hears on all sides just now that the workers are ceasing to work. It was in Victorian England accepted as an economic principle that every man had the right to sell as little labour as possible for as much money as possible. This was called competition, and was regarded as a divine institution by members of the middle classes who wished to be allowed to grow rich. For a long time it worked admirably for those who believed in it, for by some curious paradox it resulted in the working classes selling as much labour as possible for as little money as possible, an entirely opposite effect to that which was produced in the ranks of the bourgeois manufacturers. Buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest was supposed to be a blessed phrase which explained to working-men why their wages were low, not a phrase that could conceivably incite them to unite in the determination to make their wages high. All sorts of devices, such as the wages fund, were invented in order to persuade them that the wages of a labourer were limited by an iron law which did not apply to the dividends of manufacturers. Moralists kept assailing the economists and warning them that they were instilling a poisonous doctrine into the body of society—that “the Devil take the hindmost” was a Devil’s principle. As the world grew richer, however, and the hindmost did not protest too much, the economists seemed to have the better of the argument. They did not realise that the hindmost were sheep who were bound ultimately to follow the foremost. If the foremost lived for themselves rather than for society, the hindmost in the end were sure to imitate them. If the foremost preferred the ideal of

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self-aggrandisement to the ideal of equal service, the hindmost must in the nature of things follow suit. Even if we grant that the worst that is being said of the workers just now is true, it means no more than that the economic gospel of the nineteenth century is bearing its natural fruit. If we allow the Devil to take the hindmost without protest he will ultimately go further and take the whole of society.

One thing is clear, however. "The Devil take the hindmost" has now ceased to be possible as a golden rule for a civilised nation. The workers will only be content to give their work under the inspiration of another philosophy. Work with the object of self-aggrandisement can lead nowhere but to the disaster of a class war, in which each side will have nothing to support it in the fight save a bitter passion for profits. It is not that the ordinary man is not perfectly willing to go on working for his own self-aggrandisement. It is that he will not go on working for the aggrandisement of other people. He is not a saint who has suddenly abandoned the doctrine of self-interest. He is merely an ordinary man who has discovered that the doctrine of self-interest works to the advantage of others rather than himself. All he is doing at the moment is to try to twist the doctrine to his own advantage. He was told that competition is good, and he has begun to compete for as big a share as possible of the wealth of the world. His masters, terrified by the sufficiently terrific spectacle, preach to him about the good of society. But they do not as a rule practise what they preach. The history of the Excess Profits Tax, when it is fully told, with its record of captains of industry doing

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everything in their power to withhold or lessen their contributions to the State when it stood in mortal need of them, will throw a light on human nature hardly less disturbing than the fourth book of *Gulliver's Travels*. Workmen have been taught by example, though not by precept, that any man who can has a right to prey upon society. They are not taught by example that we are all members of society, owing to it an equal debt and claiming from it equal rights in return. In the result, popular ideas both of the duties of man and of the rights of man have got hopelessly muddled. Work is withheld—where it is withheld upon no large principle—simply because the gospel of greed, of which the gospel of laziness is a branch, has at last become general.

How, then, can we set the world to work again? It can be done only either by the dread of starvation or by the acceptance of a new principle as the basis of industry. Man will work happily if he has an assurance that he is serving himself and his fellows; he will not work happily if he suspects that he is mainly serving a self-seeking master. He is not a Utopian who demands the establishment of a new heaven and a new earth to-morrow. He only wishes to be able to feel that his work is a contribution to something better than an employer's balance at the bank. Work is a means of escape from the ills of starvation, ignorance, dirt, and general helplessness. It becomes nobler when it is done for the purpose of enabling others to escape from these ills. The common-places of morality tell us all this. Preachers have told us for ages that the work of a crossing-sweeper done from a generous motive is as noble as the work of a Prime Minister. Only if we get back the idea of the

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nobility of work into the general mind can we ever persuade men again to work as devotedly as they used to do. They will never work such long hours again. All the more important will it be for them—I should say for us—to work still more intensely at such work as our hands find to do. For the moment, many people are rebellious against every task that falls to them. A certain sort of domestic servant, with slovenly ways and none of the old semi-servile pride in the results of her work, has been taken as a type of much of the degraded labour of the present time. It may be that the disappearance of the old family dependent, who asked no better reward than praise for a well-cooked pie or a spotless house, is a desirable thing. I think it is. Freedom is better than good cookery. But how miserable is the race of men if we can find no way of making freedom consistent with good cookery! Freedom means something more than a slut in the kitchen and a sloven in the factory. Perhaps it means the abolition of the private kitchen altogether and of the privately-owned factory. Certainly, society must be so organised that we can fairly ask every man and woman to perform a hard and competent day's work. It is obvious that we must all "speed up" and undertake the burden of work with new energy if civilisation is to get to its feet again and march forward. This seems to me to be scarcely possible unless the social motive comes into play and to some extent balances the selfish motive in industry. The spirit of fellowship, which is praised in war, is equally indispensable in peace. Without it, what reason is there for not slacking, shirking, or indulging in any other of the various forms of industrial egotism?



## VI

### *The Men are Always Right*

“ **I** ALWAYS feel in strikes,” says Rupert Brooke in one of his letters, “ that ‘ the men are always right,’ as a man says in *Clayhanger*. Of course, the poor are always right against the rich, though often enough the men are in the wrong over some point of the moment (it’s not to be wondered at).” Rupert Brooke was much quoted in comfortable circles during the war. During the war a man was regarded as “ right-thinking ” if he was against the Germans. Since the war came to an end, however, it is not easy to get a certificate for being “ right-thinking ” unless one is hostile, not only to the Germans, but to the working classes. Had Rupert Brooke survived and given utterance to the sentence I have quoted, those who praised him as a patriot would quickly have turned and denounced him as a Bolshevik. It is, as Browning put it in the title of one of his most famous poems, *The Patriot*, “ an old story.” The life of a patriot is a short one. It is “ roses, roses all the way ” for a brief interval, but the roses have hardly had time to wither before we find that the patriot was a working-man in disguise, or a friend of the working-man. A patriot may be defined

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as a man in khaki—preferably a dead one. He is a person who is not only loyal to his country, but loyal to US. No sooner does he change out of khaki into the uniform of a railway-porter than he is transformed into an outcast. Society turns on him with a turkey-cock's gobbling rage, and speaks of him as though he were a Hun or a traitor. And those who suggest that there may be something to be said for him are denounced with the same fatuous fury of hostility. Rupert Brooke's love of England would not have saved him from the accusation of being an enemy of England. He said, "The men are always right," and, though he said it with the reservations that any man of philosophic temper must make, he thereby wrote himself down the enemy of all those whose golden rule it is that "the masters are always right." I am ready to admit that neither proposition is philosophically defensible. If I had to choose, however, between the one proposition and the other, I confess to a preference for the gospel according to Rupert Brooke and *Clayhanger*. In any given strike, the victory of the men would mean better food and a better chance for the children of the rising generation, while the victory of the masters would mean worse food and a worse chance for the children of the rising generation. It seems to me that in a strike all other issues but this are but the specious pretexts of muddled men at war.

If the average leader-writer had realised this at the beginning of the great railway strike, he would surely have hesitated before inciting the middle-classes of England to declare a class-war against the workers. The greater part of the London Press, instead of pausing



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before committing the country to a policy of disaster—instead even of acting on the cautious assumption that the men *may* sometimes be right—took up the challenge of the railwaymen with a flush of rapture as though the war frenzy had broken out again. The conflict was announced to be “one of life and death.” “Like the war with Germany,” said the *Times*, “it must be a fight to a finish.” Those who would serve as volunteers against the strike were assured that they would be “serving the State and the nation as truly as our soldiers did in the trenches.” They were even told that they would be “working for the same cause—for the cause of ordered and democratic freedom.” All the artillery of war-time *clichés* was brought into action in order to persuade the upper and middle classes that the battle against the railwaymen was but a logical continuation of the Battle of Ypres. The railwaymen were credited with exhibiting, one after another, the characteristics of the savage Hun. The middle-classes were told that they were “defending themselves now, as then, against an attack inspired by greed, ambition, and lust of power.” “All the evidence goes to show,” continued the writer in the *Times*, “that they have grasped the essential character of the present conflict, as they grasped that of the war, and are meeting it with the same undismayed and indignant resolution.” Sub-editors resurrected appropriate war-time cross-headings, such as “A Determination to ‘See It Through.’” Reporters, describing the attitude of the public, informed us that “there was something in their behaviour which recalled the way they met the greater war; a setting of the shoulders indicative of a determination to

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see it through." The Londoner, in so far as he was hostile to the strike—and it was only in so far as he was hostile to the strike that he got into the papers—was held up to himself as a sort of war-time hero who "turned hardships into pleasing adventures," and "bestowed sympathy and help on the weak and old";

At the same time, something indefinable in his manner left no misgiving on his attitude toward the sudden strike. He was setting his teeth against it; so that, where his amiability was most brightly manifested, one recalled Mr. Kipling's advice, for all whom it may concern, to beware of our countrymen when they grow polite.

As for the railwaymen, like the enemy in war, they were immediately found guilty of a number of atrocities. Both in the news columns and in leading articles attention was called to their "callous behaviour" in carrying out their threat to bring the trains to a standstill at midnight and driving "comfortably home in motor-cars," while the passengers were left stranded on the line. Strange that no reporter could rise to the occasion and describe them as jeering at their victims. Worse than this, "in London the railway horses had been left to look after themselves." "There is no need," we were told, "to emphasize the cruelty of such a decision." There was no evidence that a single horse had been left without food or drink; and, indeed, when the men turned up and offered to feed the horses, one great railway company warned them off as trespassers. But it is necessary that one's enemy should be an atrocious person. And so the story of cruelty to horses was sent

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forth as first-rate propaganda against the strikers. "The only effect of these and the like incidents," as the *Times* said, "is to fan the flame of public resentment, which appears to be burning strongly and steadily in all quarters." Yes, to those who are anxious to "fan the flame," stories of this kind are as serviceable as the tale of the mutilated Belgian child. Some of us, however, are not particularly anxious to see a great civilisation going up in a bonfire. One would have thought that any sane man would realise that the great need of the hour was not a horde of incendiaries, but the humane interposition of the fire brigade.

Once let us believe, however, that strikers are the successors of the Germans in a war for world-power or downfall, and no steps that can be taken against them will seem excessive. If in such circumstances the mob does not begin a campaign of hysterical violence against the strikers, as it did against the "aliens" during the "greater war," it will not be the fault of the capitalist Press. The *Times*, which has for three generations denounced boycotting in Ireland as one of the most odious of crimes, would apparently regard it as a virtue if directed against workers. The public, it told us, "have a most powerful weapon in their own hands, and are beginning to use it spontaneously. In some places they are bringing their resentment directly to bear on the strikers, and refusing to have any dealings with them." Soldiers and sailors were indirectly encouraged to take still more drastic steps than a semi-pacific boycott. A *Times* reporter, describing a railway journey under strike conditions from Grantham to King's Cross, related grimly :

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The general feeling seemed to be that if the strike could be run so that it would affect men only there would have been no great cause for complaint, but that by making women and children suffer the strikers were hitting "below the belt." The feeling of Service men was shown by an incident at one of our stopping places. Three sailors, walking along the platform, came across a picket, easily distinguished by the rosettes they were wearing. The sailors, apparently, were quite unfamiliar with its significance for one of them called out, "Say, mate, can you tell me where we can get a wash and something to eat? This blooming line has broken down." "That is your look-out, not ours," was the reply. The sailor, still trying to be friendly, pointing to the rosette, inquired, "What is that? Are you going to a wedding?" He was informed that it signified that he was a picket appointed by the railway strikers. "Oh," said the sailor. "Let me tell you that there are 400 of my mates aboard this train, and when they have had a bit to eat, God help you if any of those rosettes are seen." I do not know what effect his words had, but I saw no more pickets that night.

If this be not a cross between a very choice brand of cant and a covert incitement to violence, I do not know where it is to be found in a reputable newspaper. It looks as though some journalists had actually acquired a taste for the cheap prose of hate that passed for patriotism in war-time.

Journalists apparently failed to remember that the railwaymen were not foreigners, but their countrymen. Practically everything that one read in the Press was written on the assumption that the strikers were not

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only inspired by foreigners, but were a particularly vile race of foreigners themselves. I heard a man at the time praising the attitude of "the public" to the strike, and remarking: "As the *Daily Express* says, there's a quiet determination about the British." He obviously forgot that the English railway-guard and the Scottish railway-porter were as British as himself, and that, if praise is to be served out to Britons, the man must have his share as well as the master.

The truth is, we have only to realise that the strikers, instead of being a sort of corporate monster without lineage and without a country, are those good-natured persons, the railway-guard and the railway-porter, who differ from the mass of one's acquaintances only in living far thriftier lives, in order to see at once the folly of hating them and making them the objects of a class-war. The engine-driver and the signal-man are persons whom we trust daily with our lives. Why, then, pretend that they are like the Kaiser and his legions in Belgium? Any reasonable man who allows himself to think for five minutes must see that, at a crisis like the present, when there has been a revolution in the value of money, there is plenty of room for honest misunderstanding about wages among men not necessarily criminals. Even if it be granted for the nonce that the men were wrong in this or that particular, it is not difficult to understand their passionate determination never again to betray their homes into the old poverty. They are human beings struggling not for profits and luxuries, but for a minimum of decent life. The idea of accusing an unfortunate railway-porter at Clapham Junction of "ambition and lust of power," as the *Times* does by

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implication, is too ludicrous to bear a moment's examination. Strikers are, as a rule, human beings considerably below that luxury line at which "ambition and lust of power" become possible as motives of conduct. They are thinking, not of conquests with a rattling sabre, but of food and rent and clothes. That is why, in a strike about wages, it is always safe to give them the benefit of the doubt. They are more likely to be guilty of hunger than of Hunnishness. They will be the last men in the world to turn to revolution while their children have bread. The men are always right. They are right even when they are wrong.

## VII

### *Spies among the Workers*

**D**R. JOHNSON had a friend who told him that he had done his best to be a philosopher but that "cheerfulness would always keep breaking in." One would have thought—and in this one is on the popular side—that the only two things that could enable anyone to remain comparatively cheerful on this moon-struck planet were philosophy and a good digestion. The philosopher rejoices, if in nothing else, in the repetition of events. One of the most popular turns in the music-halls used to be a farcical sketch in which the clown's head would be continually reappearing through unexpected parts of the scenery. Whacked away from one window, it would instantly bob through another. Bludgeoned from that, it would reappear through a door or the floor or a skylight or round a corner. History repeats itself for the philosopher exactly like the clown's head. Such is the comic pattern. The philosopher can hardly turn over a single page of the annals of the world without uttering a "Eureka!" of delight as he sees the same old thing happening in the same old way. We have lived in our own time through all the great events of history from



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the Peloponnesian war to the French Revolution. We have been with Adam in the Garden of Eden and have followed Moses, and have watched the human comedy from the towers of Troy and have known intimately the men who condemned Socrates. We have howled with Jeremiah and announced the eternal perfection of the British Constitution with the great Duke of Wellington. We have a cousin who consults the Witch of Endor, and Voltaire is still alive within a two hours' journey by aeroplane. "Life is a joke that's just begun," sings the schoolgirl in *The Mikado*. It is the only anecdote that improves with constant reiteration. We enjoy it as a child enjoys a Jack-in-the-box. It is so continually surprising and so continually the same. "A comedy to those who think," says the epigrammatist. Certainly a comedy to those with an eye for the pattern. History repeats itself. Were it not so, history would deserve all the damning things that Herbert Spencer and other solemn writers have said of it.

To the philosophic, one of the most amusing events of the past few months was the discovery that a man was in gaol whom the Government employed as a spy but whom they now suspect of being an anarchist. The employment of spies to go among the workers in search of Bolshevist propaganda has shocked a number of people. Even Mr. J. H. Thomas seems to have been annoyed because someone followed him about the country, making the violent speeches of an agent provocateur. I confess I have little sympathy with spies—hardly even with agents provocateurs—but I think indignation will be tempered with amusement in the breasts of those who realise that this is simply the old



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anecdote coming to life again. We are once more living with Pitt in 1792 and with Castlereagh in the days that led up to the glories of Peterloo. We breathe a larger air as we feel ourselves back again in the great tradition. We become at a bound the contemporaries of Wordsworth and Lamb and Shelley. Wordsworth himself, it is interesting to remember, received the attentions of a Government spy. In August, 1797, word came to London that a dangerous French gang was engaged in a conspiracy at Stowey, near Bridgwater—that, in the words of an historian, they “received a large number of visitors, reconnoitred by night, made plans of the country in portfolios, and inquired whether the neighbouring stream was navigable from the sea.” A spy arrived on the spot. He discovered that it was not French agents who were causing the trouble but a “mischievous gang of disaffected Englishmen.” One of these was a Mr. Coleridge, “supposed a man of superior abilities.” Another was Thelwall, whose conversation was so passionate that even his (temporary) butler was frightened. Another was called Wordsworth, “a name, I think, not unknown to Mr. Ford.” Thelwall, it may be remembered, had already been indicted for sedition along with Horne Tooke in the State trials of 1794 before trial by jury had yet been abolished; and if the juries of the time refused to convict, this may partly be imputed to the fact that the plain man has a deep suspicion of the evidence of spies and informers.

One of the principal informers of the time was a man bearing the ingratiating name of Gosling, who contrived to become a member of the Corresponding Society. He is suspected by the historians of having helped to create

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the conspiracies which he “discovered.” “Two Corresponding Society members,” writes Mr. Philip Anthony Brown in his admirable book, *The French Revolution in English History*, “Hillier and Edwards, with the active connivance of a spy, had planned a scheme for getting arms and practising at a tavern off the Old Bailey, ‘The Parrot,’ in Green Arbour Court. But they never got firearms, though Edwards had a pike ; and Gosling, the informer, was largely responsible for their plans.” About the same date we find another curious instance of a man who was at once an informer and a conspirator in Edinburgh. At a secret meeting in that city Robert Watt communicated a plan for an armed insurrection and the establishment of a Provisional Government—oh, beloved history ! Though his plans never got further than the collection of a few pikeheads and battle-axes, he was afterwards tried and hanged in spite of his excellent past. It was in the course of the trial that it came out that he had been giving information to the Government since 1792. He had demanded a thousand pounds for one of his stories, and had been given thirty pounds for the expenses of treating. In his confession he declared that, while engaged in the work of spying, he had been sincerely converted to the views of his victims. Whether this was true or not there is no means of telling. How admirable a subject for a Conrad ! Among those who were present at Watt’s execution was one great novelist, Walter Scott, but this unfortunately was not his sort of subject.

When we read the history of Pitt and the spies and agents provocateurs of his time it is only fair to remember that the modern police system had not then

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come into existence. Any society will take extreme steps against violence—not, I grant, against the violence of those whom it regards as its friends but against the violence of those it suspects of being its enemies. Even so, the Government realised that the use of spies was extremely damaging to it in the popular mind, and it always did its best to keep its agents out of the courts and to force the more timid of the “conspirators” themselves to turn King’s evidence. Whether there was in the circumstances any need at all to send spies among the reformers is a point that has often been debated. The probability is that very few of the men whom the Government suspected were in favour of desperate courses. Horne Tooke had said that “he was for having kings, but for cutting off the head of one of them every fifty years or so,” and Paine said of him that “he was a true Royalist: he loved blood.” On the whole, however, his violence was the sort of thing that would nowadays pass as a mild joke at a dinner-party. There was really very little danger of a revolution except in Pitt’s imagination. The mass of the English people were as anti-French as Pitt was himself, and it may well be doubted whether the spies did not instigate more violence than they prevented. Mr. Brown justly observes that “the issue must be narrowed down to the delicate question whether the Secretary of State was aware that his agents were inciting incautious but innocent men to crime, as well as encouraging deliberate criminals to commit themselves. . . . The story,” he adds, “is chiefly valuable as evidence of the panic which beset the Government at every moment of crisis. The whole system—spies, coercion, and rigid

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opposition to all political change—is of a piece.” These sentences suggest the dilemma in which any Government which makes use of spies must continually find itself. The majority of spies must in the nature of things be men whose honesty is, to put it delicately, piebald. In the absence of evidence, will not men of this character be tempted to invent it in order to curry favour with their employers? Spies, like other human beings, are hopeful of promotion, and they know that the discovery of a bogus plot is more likely to lead to promotion than the discovery of no plot at all. Who will spy upon the spies?

When we come down to the time of Sidmouth and Castlereagh we find that a strong suspicion exists that many of the more violent conspiracies were the work not of genuine revolutionaries but of spies. Archibald Prentice, who left behind him an unusually attractive book of reminiscences of the Manchester of Peterloo, roundly accuses Government agents of being at the bottom of practically every conspiracy and outrage of the period. The notorious spy Oliver, he declares, had advised the assemblage of the Blanketeers, and had been in favour of the hopeless rising in Derbyshire, as a result of which three men were hanged. Spies were also accused of having produced an outbreak in Scotland by spreading stories that other parts of the country were ripe for revolt. “Even the wicked conspiracy of Thistlewood and his confederates,” says Prentice, “to assassinate the King’s Ministers at a Cabinet dinner, had no effect in exciting sympathy in favour of the latter, for there was the strongest evidence to prove that Edwards, a Government spy, was the originator of the

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scheme, and that he had provided the arms with which the murders were to have been effected." The student of history, needless to say, is not bound to accept as evidence the opinions of even so honest a reformer as Prentice. Such opinions are important, not because they can be proved to be right, but because they show how exasperating to the public mind the use of Government spies may easily become. It seems to be almost as natural to hate one's own Government for spying as to hate a foreign Government for spying. So great was the fury of opinion against Oliver, indeed, that debate after debate on his activities took place in both Houses of Parliament. Oliver, Spencer Walpole tells us in his *History of England from 1815*, "took up more parliamentary time and received more attention, both in 1817 and 1818, than almost any other subject." Even so mild a politician as Charles Lamb was revolted by the use the authorities made of informers, and in *The Three Graves* he pictured Satan digging graves in Hell for spies :

I asked the fiend for whom these rites were meant.  
"These graves," quoth he, "when life's brief oil is spent,  
When the dark night comes, and they're sinking bed-  
wards,  
I mean for Castle, Oliver, and Edwards."

Bad verse, very bad verse, if you like, but how representative of the attitude of the normal decent man to the use of spies in the domestic affairs of a civilised people !

What, then, is the common-sense attitude to the whole business of spying ? If one were sure that the spy was a perfectly honest man, whose sole aim was the

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collection of accurate information, and who had a trained sense of evidence, he would obviously be an invaluable servant to any Government. Men with these gifts, unfortunately, as a rule become lawyers or novelists or captains of industry. The rewards of spying are too small to tempt them, apart from the fact that their moral sense recoils with some fastidiousness from the trade. As a result, Governments are compelled to fall back on men who could hardly make a living as bookmakers' touts. For the most part they are so stupid that, when Mr. Asquith said that he would not sheathe the sword, etc., they probably rushed to the conclusion that he was about to become another Brutus. They are ignorant of the meaning of words, inaccurate in their reports, mules who discover little but mares' nests. The most useful spy is the traitor who sells an important secret, and whose work is subject to the constant test of verification. And even he is as liable to betray his employers as his friends. The cleverest are those who feed the panic of Governments at regular intervals with plausible sensations—who even perpetrate atrocities themselves, if no one else will do it, in order to show how necessary they are. One has heard of such men—in Russia—where history is even more amusing than it is in England.



## VIII

### *Profiteers*

**H**ARD things have been said about profiteers during the last few years. Hard things continue to be said about them. The profiteers, I imagine, having survived so many centuries as a mandarin race, have lost the capacity for feeling nervous—and I do not wonder at it. The thunders of the Old Testament days did not blast them ; the legislation of the Middle Ages did not snare them in its net ; the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries loosed them in vast numbers upon the world as men sent by God to build up their fortunes at the expense of their fellows. The more civilisation advanced, indeed, the more the profiteer seemed to stand out as an heroic figure. Gain is never exalted into a position of absolute honour except in a complex civilisation in which a well-organised and comfortable class finds it convenient—unconsciously, no doubt—to invent a philosophy in defence of its comfort.

Human society in its early stages knows nothing of the glorification of the rich tradesman competing with other rich tradesmen as to who shall profit most at the expense of the community. Selfishness, however, probably existed even on the day after the expulsion

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from Eden. Kings and medicine-men early took advantage of their fellows to accumulate power and pelf. More and more of the communal land was marked out by strong and cunning individuals as their own, and every robbery had only to persist in order to become a right supported by all manner of divine sanctions. This was the method of the advance of the race. The evolution of the sense of the individual was as necessary as the evolution of the sense of the community, and human beings were probably destined to acquire it by experimenting with tyranny, war, capitalism, and a host of other things that the modern idealist is apt to dismiss as wholly evil. At the same time, we should be mad to allow the sense of the individual to oust the sense of the community altogether, as Nietzsche, like the bad sort of grocer, wished it to do. We may admit the uses of experimenting with greed in the past without necessarily believing in experimenting with greed in the future. The sense of the individual is not now so feeble in us that it needs a stimulus. It is the sense of the community in regard to which we are badly endowed. The fact that the profiteers flourish as they do at a time when the community is in peril shows that the social sense of modern man is not much more than out of its shell. At the beginning of the war the *Daily Mail* proclaimed a new brotherhood in which the rich man would be willing to share his last crust with the poor ; but, when the rich man showed no inclination to do this and proposed to go on with his profit-making on the old lines, the *Times* came out in defence of his rights. England socialised its manhood for the duration of the war, but it refused to socialise its money. Society is



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still regarded by many people less as a community than as a trade union of profiteers.

Burke wrote in defence of this anti-social individualism when England was threatened with scarcity during the French war. He fulminated against the idea of interfering with profiteers of any kind in order either to raise wages or to lower prices, as though this were to threaten the foundations of society. When it was suggested that the farmers were profiteering at the expense of the labourers, he dogmatically retorted that "it is plainly more the farmer's interest that his men should thrive than that his horses should be well fed, sleek, plump, and fit for use, or than that his waggon and ploughs should be strong, in good repair, and fit for service." He did not ask himself whether the farmer realised that his interest lay in this direction. He took it for granted that the farmer would do so, though the most superficial knowledge of human nature would have taught him otherwise. He would not allow that even avarice could lead a farmer to pay a labourer less than was right :

But if the farmer is excessively avaricious ? Why, so much the better—the more he desires to increase his gains, the more interested is he in the good condition of those upon whose labour his gains must principally depend.

As to the condition of the labourer who happened to be paid less than a subsistence-wage, he could claim nothing "according to the rules of commerce and the principles of justice," but came "within the jurisdiction of mercy." The law should simply leave him,

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Burke held, to charity. "In that province the magistrate has nothing at all to do ; his interference is a violation of the property which it is his office to protect." And if the farmer ought to be protected in his right to pay as little as he could for labour and to charge as much as he could for produce, every other kind of profiteer had Burke equally on his side :

What is true of the farmer is equally true of the middle man, whether the middle man act as factor, jobber, salesman or speculator, in the markets of grain. These traders are to be left to their free course, and the more they make, and the richer they are, and the more largely they deal, the better both for the farmer and consumer, between whom they form a natural and most useful link of connection ; though by the machinations of the old evil counsellor, *Envy*, they are hated and maligned by both parties.

Even Lord Devonport (who drew the line when the profits on swedes and haricot beans rose beyond some hundreds per cent) would have seemed to Burke like a sinister figure out of the French Revolution.

Since those days we have discovered a good many fallacies in Burke and the politicians and economists who came after him. We can appreciate their hatred of laws in restraint of trade. But we see the folly of their hatred of laws in restraint of tradesmen. We no longer take it for granted that all will go well with society so long as men of property are allowed to do what they like. Experience has in almost all ages led men to regard the profiteer as the enemy rather than the benefactor of society. Among the ancient Jews he who ground the faces of the poor was not praised for doing

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the poor good. Usury, the chief form of profiteering in those days, was forbidden, except when a non-Hebrew was the victim. Among the Christians in the Middle Ages also interest was forbidden by a multitude of laws. Profit of this kind, as well as that exaggeration of it which we call profiteering, was regarded as both anti-social and unchristian. And other kinds of profiteers were in an equal degree criminals before the law. Engrossers who bought the corn crops in the field or in the stack and held them back for a time of high prices—forestallers and regrators who in other ways attempted to buy in the cheapest markets and sell in the dearest—were not supported (as they would have been in the nineteenth century) as model citizens. In *The Economic History of England* Mr. E. Lipson quotes from the municipal records of Bristol a description of a forestaller which seems, apart from its opening words of condemnation, almost like the portrait of an efficient modern business man. The forestaller, we are told, is

a manifest oppressor of the poor and a public enemy of the whole communalty and county, who hastens to buy before others grain, fish, herrings, or anything vendible whatsoever, coming by land or by water, . . . making gain, oppressing his poorer and despising his richer neighbours, and who designs to sell more dearly what he so unjustly acquired. Who also besets foreign merchants coming with their merchandise, offering to sell their goods for them, and suggesting to them that they could sell their goods more dearly than they were proposing to sell them, and so by fraudulent art or craft he misleads town and country.

Critics of the Middle Ages may justly raise the question

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whether the laws against extortion, and especially the laws against interest, were not in their effects at times laws against progress—laws, indeed, which acted to the disadvantage of the community at large. And no doubt the laws were often better in their intentions than in their results. They are of especial interest to us at the present moment, however, not because they were perfectly successful in their operation, but because they remind us that the normal attitude of society to the profiteer is an attitude of suspicion and hostility. The love of gain, as we are beginning to see once more in these days, is a rather horrible vice and is secretly at war with all the fine passions, including patriotism. There were many centuries in which the love of profit was a passion to which reputable men and women were strangers. The ill-name the Jews got in Europe was due largely to the way in which, closed out of the ordinary professions, they turned their hand to profiteering. Shylock only becomes dignified when he exchanges profiteering for the loftier vice of revenge. On the other hand, in recent centuries, the Christian has more and more become a man whose mind is normally occupied with the thought of gain. The average tradesman has been educated in the belief that to do anything except for the purpose of gain is a form of idleness. He preaches a more social creed to his restive employees, but he himself always regards it as his right to take the last possible farthing out of the pocket of the public. The way in which the price of tobacco was raised some time ago beyond what was enough to cover the new taxation is a typical example of the sort of thing of which tradesmen should be ashamed, but are not. The

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ethics of trade, it is to be feared, are still of the shakiest. One often hears of unjust and snobbish prejudices against trade, but it seems to me the prejudice against trade is founded to some extent on a reasonable antipathy to a kingdom exclusively of money values. Men feel that a world in which so much trickery, extortion, cheating, and adulteration are taken for granted lacks something of dignity, even though peerages and knight-hoods are scattered to it by the hundred. Most of us are in revolt just now against the tradesman's view of life. We begin to question his rights in the consciousness of our own exceeding wrongs.

## IX

### *The Nouveau Riche*

THERE has seldom been anyone more consistently unpopular than the *nouveau riche*. He gets his own way, it is true, and has a large choice as regards wives, titles, and diversions. But we all sneer at him behind his back. He has been the theme of satirists for hundreds of years. He has no friends in literature—that unpurchasable judge. His lack of manners, taste, and noble purposes has moved men to derisive mirth since Petronius described the most vulgar and fantastic of banquets. The *nouveau riche* of to-day is despised even by the *nouveau riche* of yesterday. He receives no warm welcome from those who are themselves the sons and grandsons of earlier *nouveaux riches*. It is the tendency of those who have made or inherited money to regard themselves as a stable and lordly community, and to scorn the late-comers into the circle as alien intruders.

It is rather amusing at the present moment to see many rich men who made their fortunes before the war engaged in a campaign for putting a special tax on rich men who made their fortunes during the war. There are no doubt many motives, some good and some

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dubious, inspiring those who are taking part in the campaign. One of the good motives is a desire to make it clear in some way that no citizen is expected to reap financial advantage from the fact that his country is engaged in a life-and-death struggle. As for the others, I fancy that some place must be found among them for a desire to clip the wings of parvenus. The man who owns estates or a long-established fortune has no more liking for parvenus than has the shrillest preacher of a class-war. The parvenu is the sort of profiteer whom all the traditional profiteers are willing to throw to the wolves. They do not like him. He speaks badly, and has a vulgar face and hands. He looks ridiculous in evening dress—indeed, in any dress. He is a pretentious parrot of tastes to which he has not been brought up. He is never at ease and seeks to strengthen his position by display. Comic writers have laughed at him for centuries on account of his antics as he attempts to adapt himself to the culture and manners of his new circle. He is an absurd figure, like a grown-up person turned into a schoolboy and sent into a class for beginners. Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* gets all the fun that genius can get out of a situation of the kind. But the modern world, the modern play, and the modern musical comedy have all been full of the same sort of mockery. Harold Frederic's millionaire, if I remember rightly, used to splash water on the bedroom floor, when he was staying at a country house, in order to give the servants the impression that he had taken a cold bath—a habit he had not yet acquired. In the theatre we had Beerbohm Tree a few years ago in a fine and detailed study of a vulgar rich man in *Business is Business*. And



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it is not many years since South African millionaires were constantly appearing as butts in musical comedy. One still remembers the fierce glitter from the diamonds on their fingers. I can recall no good book, indeed, nor even any bad play, in which the parvenu has been treated as a character to admire. Some American novelists have made the making of money a theme on the heroic level. But the ablest of them, such as Mrs. Wharton, have preferred to satirise the luxury and artificial lives of their "get-rich-quick" countrymen. In the nineteenth century many respectable writers preached through tale and treatise a gospel of Christian greed of gold. But none of this has lasted as literature. Literature, like religion, is by tradition critical of the rich man.

It is easy to understand why the rich man has so bad a name among prophets and authors. It is because the average rich man is more anxious that society should serve him than that he should serve society. The average poor man, too, it may be ; for "all we like sheep," etc. But the rich man represents in visible and exalted form the triumph of egoism as opposed to public spirit. I do not forget the considerable number of rich men who have rendered services to society both while making their fortunes and afterwards. I am considering the average newly-rich man, however, and it is indubitable that one of his most marked characteristics is a strong belief in the rights of money and a very weak belief (if any) in the duties of money. He holds that the still, small voice of the social conscience which has been making itself heard in the last generation or two is a delusion, like the voices heard by Joan of Arc.



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Even when he goes to church on Sunday, and hears from the pulpit that he has his wealth only on trust, he thinks : " No, no. You mean, in a trust." He believes that money is the end and the justification of most things. He thinks that railways and electric light and music and cornfields are justified only because they pay. " Mr. Hill," said a reporter to Mr. Louis Hill, one of the " railroad kings " of America, some years ago, " what do you regard as the prime function of a railway corporation ? " " Get revenues," replied Mr. Hill. " And then ? " he was asked. " Get more," was his answer. " The reporter," according to the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, " waited patiently to hear something added ; Mr. Hill waved his hand. The interview was over." This to the modern mind seems to be a business-man's declaration of independence of morality. More and more people are coming to see that railways would be necessary even if they made no money for anybody and were as free as the roads, or even if, as Mr. Shaw proposes, passengers had to be paid twopence a mile for travelling on them. Every time a railway strike occurs, however, it becomes clear that a great many people still labour under the delusion that the chief function of a railway is to " get dividends." Theoretically, one would think, the only means by which a railway company could earn dividends must be by serving the public interest. And, obviously, a company would soon lose money if it began to run all its trains to the wrong places or if it refused to consult the convenience of passengers by letting them know when the trains started or at what stations they would stop or what the fare would be. One's complaint against the railways

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is not that they do not serve the public interest at all, but that they regard themselves as justified in repeatedly subordinating it to private interests. The railways in England, however, have for a long time ceased to provide parvenus with fortunes. Had they been as comparatively free from control as ships and munition factories, they might have done so during the war. There is nothing in the accepted theory of the rights of wealth that could have prevented them. All over the country, in war-time as in peace-time, rich and would-be-rich men acted on the principle that England's difficulty was Cræsus's opportunity. And now, as a result of five years of war, a new crop of *nouveaux riches* is blossoming in every city and small town in the island. The race-courses, the restaurants, the stalls of the music-halls are packed with them. Who could have foretold five years ago that in the autumn of 1919 so many odd-looking creatures would be smoking two-shilling cigars and drinking champagne at ever-so-much a bottle? Yet that is what is now causing considerable offence. One hears these people blamed not only for making money but for spending it. This suggests how hard is the lot of the rich. They are denounced if they spend their money, and they are denounced if they save it. Even Mr. Carnegie, who lavished millions on libraries in preference to jewels, drinks, or gluttony, did not escape censure.

On the other hand, one does not think of Mr. Carnegie as a typical parvenu. One chooses by preference as a type of the *nouveau riche* a wild and symbolic exaggeration, such as the late Chicago millionaire, Charles G. Gates. Mr. Gates was the son of "Bet You a Million"

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Gates. He himself was known as "Spend a Million a Year" Gates, and, indeed, he spent a million dollars a year on tips alone. He once, it is said, nearly scared a waiter to death by paying for a hundred-dollar dinner with a thousand-dollar bill and bidding him keep the change. He took as his motto, "Speed is life," and spent millions of dollars in travelling in special trains. "My father," he declared, "left me more money than I know what to do with. Money is made to burn, anyway, and I am burning it. I only want enough left to buy a coffin after I am dead." Other American parvenus have done their best to rival Mr. Gates in fantastic extravagance. There was the New York millionaire, for instance, who at a dinner gave his guests cigarettes wrapped in hundred-dollar notes. A millionaire from Nebraska spent twenty thousand dollars on having a hat made for him out of paper-money. The "freak" dinners given some years ago by American millionaires are famous. At one dinner the guests were given oysters, each of which contained a pearl. Even more fantastic is the story of the millionaire's wife who kept a pet monkey, which had a valet in constant attendance. It had its own dining-table and its own bed of ivory and gold. It is supposed to have cost its mistress between ten and fifteen thousand dollars a year. In America, for some reason or other, extravagance takes a more fantastic form than in England. The reason may be that in an old country certain standards are already in existence in society for people who have great possessions. America, however, sprang from being a moneyless country to being a moneyed country in a few years. In the days of Washington,

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there was little money in America outside the towns ; in Maryland and Virginia there was a tobacco currency, while in other country parts prices were calculated in terms of wheat, milk, and rye whiskey. America is thus a country of rich men without a long tradition of riches. Many of her millionaires, too, have risen from poverty, and in their extravagance are simply carrying out a poor boy's dream of what he would do if he had heaps of money. If we read the history of American millionaires, we shall find that one began as an office-boy, another selling papers, another in a grocery store, another as a porter, another as a bobbin-boy. This being so, can we be surprised if one of them gives his friends cigarettes wrapped in hundred-dollar notes ? Sir James Barrie, I fancy, could make this appear an attractive caprice. The boyish daydream of throwing money about is more charming to the imagination than the grown man's dream of hoarding it. The worst of it is, people throw it about so vulgarly. One likes to think that Charles James Fox and his friends did it more like gentlemen ; but this may be an illusion of the historic imagination. Certainly, literature is kinder to the spendthrift than to the miser. The spendthrift, as in *The School for Scandal*, is usually forgiven in the end. The best the miser can hope for is the consolation prize of our pity. It is important, however, that the spendthrift, if he is to prove attractive in literature, should be brought up a gentleman. Otherwise, we shall be sure to make unpleasant remarks, and jeer at him as a parvenu and a profiteer.

*On Saying a Thing Three Times*

IT is not only in the world of Lewis Carroll that, if you say a thing three times, it becomes true. Everything is a lie—at least, it might as well be one—till it has been said three times or considerably oftener. It was once true, so far as the human race knew, that the sun goes round the earth. It was a fantastic lie, so far as everybody knew, that the earth goes round the sun. This remained a lie for most people long after a few learned men knew it to be a fact. It was by dint of constant repetition that it finally won a place among established truths. Similarly, the theory of the circulation of the blood, and the theory of evolution, only passed from the region of scandalous inventions into commonplace facts as a result of being repeated over and over again. It is easier to believe a lie that one has heard a thousand times than to believe a fact that one has never heard before. Nine-tenths of our beliefs are a consequence of mere reiteration. If truth ultimately prevails over error, it is because wise men armed with evidence repeat themselves still more audaciously and unhesitatingly than foolish men armed with tradition. But, with the mass of the public, it is

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not the evidence but the repetition that counts. What does the average man know about the courses of the moon or about vaccination or about the Russian character? On these, as on most subjects, he believes simply what he has been told oftenest. In one generation he believes in ghosts; in another generation he believes that there are no ghosts. In each case his belief is a superstition into which he has been talked, not reasoned. Examine him as to the rational basis of his faith, and you will find that he knows very little about the matter.

Aware of his own temperament, and of his submissiveness to the repeated word, man early came to the conclusion that he could influence even the heavenly and infernal powers by saying the same thing over and over again. Both in spells and in prayers, much of the virtue of the argument is in the repetition. The Buddhist of Thibet has his little praying-wheel that circulates his monotonous appeal, "The Jewel in the Lotus, Amen." He feels that by the mechanical repetition of these words, even on a strip of paper, he is influencing Heaven. Similarly, the European magician, when he has drawn his circle with consecrated chalk, writes in it some repeated phrase, such as "Tetragrammaton, Tetragrammaton, Tetragrammaton," or "Come, Surgat! Come, Surgat! Come, Surgat!" The suppliant at the holy well has usually to perform his round nine times widdershins. Heaven is not trusted to attend to an unpeated argument. Even the Christian with his "Lord, have mercy on us!" and his multitude of "Hail, Marys," seems to take it for granted that the best petition is repetition. The victory is to the im-



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portunate. The child, asking its mother to do something, cries, "Do ! Do ! Do !" And it is more difficult to refuse an iterated request of this sort than a simple appeal. It is as though repetition put a spell on us. The poets discovered this. Hence the chorus in songs and the burden in ballads. In the music-halls, it is the chorus that makes the song. In half the modern ballads, how many readers remember anything but the burden—

O Troy's down,  
Tall Troy's on fire ;

or the extremely improbable—

Two red roses across the moon !

A thing that is said once seems but an accident. A thing that is repeated often enough slides into its place in the order of nature. What an encouragement for bores ! Even the original man catches the public ear less by virtue of his originality than by virtue of repeating himself. Matthew Arnold repeated himself deliberately. "Sweetness and light," "sweet reasonableness," "Philistine," "Barbarian," "poetry a criticism of life"—he sowed his phrases, like seeds, not singly but broadcast. He could not trust an isolated phrase to take root in the public mind. He cunningly gave his best phrases a multitude of chances. In this he showed his knowledge of human nature. The great wits have usually been as careful to ensure the success of their witticisms. The man with a *mot* is not content to utter it once. He scatters it about as an actress does her photographs. This is regarded by some people as a sign of poverty of



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invention, of rather despicable thrift. The wit, however, knows that he is much more likely to impress the world with one good epigram repeated twenty times than with twenty good epigrams uttered once and left to fend for themselves. Oscar Wilde's reputation for brilliance was due in part to his business-like economy of brilliance. If he thought of an epigram, he made use of it first at the dinner-table, then in an essay, and then in a play. As a consequence people got to know his epigrams, and, getting to know them, got to be impressed by them.

In the advertising world the importance of repetition has long been recognised. Suppose the manufacturer of a certain famous pill had been content on one occasion and on one occasion only to drop the casual remark that his wares were "worth a guinea a box." What would the world have known about it? Who would have believed it to be true? He repeated that they were "worth a guinea a box," however, in every newspaper and on every hoarding until a hundred thousand Englishmen know the phrase for one who could quote you an epigram of La Rochefoucauld. Another manufacturer made a soap world-famous by saying over and over again that it "won't wash clothes." One would imagine that a soap might have more admirable qualities. But the repetition impressed the public as no testimonial from an archbishop could have done. It decided that there was something in it. The newspapers themselves have begun to use the method of repetition in advertising. One's eye is constantly met by the rhymes :

*The Daily Mail*  
Million sale,

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and the rival *Daily News* advertisement :

All classes and ages  
Enjoy its bright pages.

No doubt these will be followed in time with :

*The Morning Post*  
Is the butler's boast.

Political journalists, too, have learned that the easiest way to cast a spell is to repeat it an infinite number of times. Mr. Asquith's downfall was prepared for by the damnable iteration of the phrase, "Wait and see." It did not matter to his enemies that the phrase, as he used it, could bear no such construction as they put on it. The mass of readers forgot the occasion of its use. They were content to jeer "Wait and see," and, the oftener they said it, the more they got to like it and to believe that it expressed the whole truth about Mr. Asquith's statesmanship. Similarly, Lord Haldane's unpopularity only became popular after a number of unscrupulous journalists had "talked 'spiritual home'" till their pens ached. One sometimes wonders what proportion of the phrases that help to bring statesmen and parties down have any relation to fact. It seems at times as if one side had all the arguments and the other side had all the phrases, and the phrases ultimately won. Most people remember how, some years ago, the Progressives were driven out of power in London by a hideous poster in which a monster with outstretched finger ingeminated "It's your money we want" from every hoarding. London has never recovered from the spell of that haunting face and phrase.

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The other side, it may be, got its revenge later in national politics with the sentence, "Your food will cost you more." Yes, the phrase is omnipotent on both sides. Happy is the side that has the greediest phrases and that can repeat them the greatest number of times !

Just at present a large section of the English Press is engaged in a campaign against nationalisation ; and it is fighting it for the most part not by the method of argument but by the method of repeated assertion. Day after day, in newspaper after newspaper, we find it asserted that the war knocked the bottom out of nationalisation. "After our experience of nationalisation during the war," the leader-writers say, "the public is not likely to be enamoured of it." Frequently, they stop there. They know that if they drop this suggestion into a sufficient number of ears a sufficient number of times, thousands of people will begin to believe it. Even though it is contrary to fact, it will become for a large part of the stupid race of man true. The journalist is in a measure a hypnotist : he works largely by suggestion. The hypnotist in *The Lost Leader* murmurs "Sleep ! Sleep ! Sleep !" till his patient's head falls on the table. The journalist wins his victories by similar means. He repeats to the reader "You know such-and-such a thing," till the unfortunate reader does know it—or thinks he does. If reason, and not repetition, played the chief part in forming public opinion, few men would by now remain unconverted to the principle of nationalisation. For one thing, it was with a nationalised Army and a nationalised Navy that England helped to win the war. I have not yet met any journalist bold enough to protest against the national-

## *On Saying a Thing Three Times*

isation of the submarine, or to urge that fighting in the air should be left to private enterprise. There was until fairly recently still some scope for private enterprise in war by sea. Privateers, with letters of marque, remained a feature of sea-warfare until they were abolished in 1856 by the Declaration of Paris. Similarly, private enterprise has held an important place in land warfare in various ages. The *condottieri* of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries raised troops in the same business spirit in which a theatrical manager now raises a touring company. So rapacious and incompetent were these "private enterprise" soldiers that in the end States found it cheaper and more efficient to nationalise their armies. And in the recent war—or should one say the present war?—it was found necessary to extend the principle of nationalisation in still other directions. Private enterprise in the matter of the supply of munitions and the supply of food threatened this island with disaster, and had statesmen not introduced to some extent—to too small an extent—the principle of nationalisation and national control, the end of the war would still be in the future even if some of the Allies had not actually had to throw down their arms. I have yet to discover any instance of State ownership, State interference, or State control during the war, which sane men would like on public grounds to have seen exchanged for private enterprise. If there has been muddle and mismanagement, this is in many cases due to the fact that statesmen did not act in the spirit of nationalisation, but were compromising with private interests at every turn. Nationalisation can be a success only if the men who manage a nation's affairs believe

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in nationalisation. Apart from this, no intelligent man believes that nationalisation will suddenly put an end to the inefficiency of human beings. If one defends it, it is not because it will give perfect results, but because it will give better results than private enterprise. Governments will err like private individuals, but in a democratic State they are more likely to be amenable to public considerations than are private individuals. One thing was proved conclusively during the war. Private enterprise unchecked and uncontrolled was so free from anything like a sense of public duty that men of all parties had to unite in setting bounds to it. Now that the compulsion of war has been removed, however, the private interests are raising their heads again, and are anxious to persuade the public that what they call "nationalisation" worked badly. The least that can be said of it is that it worked infinitely better than private enterprise. It is necessary to point this out three times—it may be seventy times seven times—till the public sees that it is true.

## *A Defence of Parliament*

**R**ETIRED generals are said to believe that Parliament is not what it used to be. Probably (to adapt an old joke) it never was. Parliament, to say truth, has always been looked on with disrespect both by the extreme reactionaries and the extreme revolutionaries. It is only a number of quite moderate persons, with souls as shiny and inoffensive as hard-boiled eggs, who have ever been in the habit of referring to it as "the palladium of national liberties." Crusty old gentlemen, when they extol the dignity of Parliament, are invariably thinking of the Parliament of a former generation. They look back on the Parliaments of Pitt or of Palmerston with veneration because they think that Parliament was then a highly exclusive club of well-behaved gentlemen, which has since been ruined by the incursion of Nationalists and Labour men and by the payment of members. They forget the frequency of drunkenness, ill-temper, and vulgar behaviour in the old-time Parliament. "I cannot see the Speaker, Hal, can you?" says Pitt in the famous squib. "Not see the Speaker, Billy? I see two," replies Henry Dundas, his fellow-Minister. One of the best-known anecdotes

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of the House of Commons, again, is that which tells how, during the debate on the peace with France in 1783, Pitt was so drunk that he had to retire and be sick behind the Speaker's chair while Fox was speaking against him. History records that even during the contortions of sickness he kept an ear open for Fox's arguments and afterwards returned to his place and made an able speech in reply. Nor were scenes as reprehensible unknown in the nineteenth century. Sir George Rose, a country gentleman, one evening in a state of exhilaration called on the Speaker for a comic song. When he was asked to apologise, he said he would apologise to no man, not even to King George, and certainly not to the little chap in the big wig. Mr. Michael MacDonagh, who relates these and many other famous anecdotes in his book on Parliament, reminds us that the House of Lords was not free from similar scenes. When Lord Brougham, as Lord Chancellor, was making a speech in defence of the Reform Bill of 1832 from the Woolsack, he had five tumblers of mulled port, laced with brandy, brought to him at intervals. As the last glass was brought, a Tory peer exclaimed : " There is another half-hour good for us, and be damned to him ! " " When," continues Mr. MacDonagh, " the Lord Chancellor came to his final sentence, ' I warn you, I implore you—yea, on my bended knees I supplicate you, reject not this Bill,' he knelt on the Woolsack, whence he slipped to the floor, and his friends, rushing up to congratulate him, helped him to his feet again." No, there is no use in pretending that the Parliaments of the past were incapable of degraded scenes. Members even continued to suck oranges in the House of Commons



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until the middle of the nineteenth century. No Labour Member has ever committed such an outrage as this.

Sentimentalism over the Parliaments of the past, however, at the expense of the Parliament of the present, would be merely a thing to smile at if it had not in recent years helped to add to the volume of feeling in favour of "direct action." Before the war, there were two bodies of opinion in favour of "direct action." There were the Syndicalists, who did not believe in the sanctity of any Parliament, and there were the followers of Mr. Bonar Law, who believed only in the sanctity of the Parliaments of the past. Mr. Bonar Law, by going over to Belfast, brought Jack Cade back into politics. He raised "direct action" to heights of success that it had not known since the days of the Land League. His contempt for Parliament has, from an opposite point of view, been endorsed by the more revolutionary elements in contemporary politics. When Parliament is despised by men of Cabinet Minister rank, it is not likely to be revered by the plebs. And, indeed, by a curious irony of fate, the Front Benchers, who despised Parliament when they were out of power, have continued to treat it with something like contempt when in control of it. Parliament is now an organ of the Cabinet, instead of the Cabinet's being an organ of Parliament. England is governed by a cabal, not by a committee of the nation. Parliament fortunately shows some signs of reasserting itself. But, with a notorious "direct actionist" sitting on the Woolsack, the atmosphere is not altogether favourable to constitutionalism in politics. The great need of the moment in politics in Western Europe is a revival of respect for Parliament, and to this

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end it behoves not only Ministers, but members of all parties to make respect of Parliament possible once more to an intelligent man. At present, even those who respect Parliament as an institution find it difficult to respect as a thing in being. This is a disastrous and ominous state of affairs. It can only give pleasure to those who believe that the world is to be saved, not by orderly and rational means, but by a series of violent catastrophes.

Human society never took a more important step forward than when it discovered in the art of conference a good working substitute for the art of fighting. In primitive days, when a man found another standing in his way, his instinct was to assassinate him, if possible, or, if necessary, to fight him. He ultimately found, however, that even fighting could not be depended on as a means of annihilating his enemy. Many fights exhausted both sides long before a decision could be reached, so that the parties had to meet in conference and come to terms. It slowly dawned on human beings that in civil affairs fighting was an unnecessary preliminary to a conference. A conference before the battle gave hopes of being, on the whole, as satisfactory as a conference after the battle. There was always a potential battle in the background, but men took it for granted, like a theoretic battle fought on a map, and decided it by counting the heads and the other resources on both sides. They conferred on the understanding that the strength of each side was known and that there was no need to put it to the test of bloodshed. It was a long time, however, before men found it easy to fall in with this extremely convenient arrangement. Many men have a native passion, not for compromise, but for

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supreme power. Kings, barons, and "commoners" have all aimed at it in their time ; and to-day we have what is called the "class-conscious minority of the proletariat" aiming at it. In a world that has witnessed the excesses of would-be supreme kings in the seventeenth century, of would-be supreme landlords in the eighteenth century, and of would-be supreme manufacturers in the nineteenth century, it is impossible to be surprised at the rise of a would-be supreme proletariat in the twentieth century. In so far as the proletariat is infected by this disturbing passion, however, it is merely a new incarnation of the Cæsars that have gone before it. It is deliberately choosing the ancient settlement by violence rather than the more civilised settlement by conference. It is declaring war on reason and deifying triumph. It is rushing back to the romantic passions of the Wars of the Roses and of the Civil War.

If one believed that Utopia could be suddenly and permanently established by catastrophes of this kind, one could not reasonably object to them. But I find it difficult to believe in the immediate perfectibility of man as the result of any political victory whatever. Even the most successful revolution would speedily have to revert to the machinery of conference, and this machinery of conference would have to take account of the will not only of the class-conscious minority (whether rich or poor) but of every body of citizens which is educated enough to be organised. There already exists in England and all free countries a Parliament which can easily be made use of for the purpose of thus expressing the general will. The English worker has only to say the word at a general election, and he can nationalise

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the mines, have universities built to accommodate the entire youth of the country, and if he wished to do it, even set up a Guild Socialist Republic. Perhaps he could not go quite so far as the last step without producing the "direct action" of a counter-revolution. But without producing this result he could certainly go a long way towards transforming the face of England. Yet some men who are in theory democrats appear to have given up the hope of ever persuading the worker to make what they would call proper use of his vote. They call on him to grasp at Utopia, not with a vote, but with a revolution. They believe that in the heat of a general election he is likely to show himself a fool, but that in the heat of a general revolution he will show himself a sage and a statesman. Alas, both at general elections and in revolutions, human beings have almost universally shown themselves to be largely fools. To judge from history there is no reason to believe that they are less likely to be tricked in a revolution than at an election.

Parliament, indeed, can never hope to be a congress of a nation's best wisdom. Neither can even the most idealistic revolutionary committee. Each has ultimately to carry along with it the will of the average man, and it is bound to be hampered by the average man's shortcomings in intelligence, education, steadiness of purpose, and public spirit. In democratic countries, that statesman best serves his people who ennoble Parliament by ennobling the purposes of the average man. This he can do by infecting him with the example of public spirit, by holding up before his eyes the brazen serpent of justice, and by collaborating with him in the task of raising the coming generation to a level of edu-

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cated intelligence that will enable it to discover the secret of a finer civilisation. If Parliament is merely to reflect this or that politician's love of power, the average man will turn from it as an instrument of trickery when it ought to attract him as an instrument of human progress. If it cannot respond sensitively, indeed, both to his needs and to his sense of justice, he will come to regard it impatiently as a mere obstruction invented by babblers. The average socialist is not among those who deride discussion as a means of arriving at a solution of the problems of the hour. It is hard to think of any other means by which one mind can co-operate freely with another in the settlement of these problems. It seems clear enough that the babbling Parliament of England was a more efficient and speedy instrument for furthering the welfare of society than the silent bureaucracies of Tsarist Russia. At the same time, Parliament must become the mouthpiece of a nation instead of the mouthpiece of an accidentally victorious Cabinet if the average citizen is to turn to it with either hope or trust. It should be the organ of the nation's free speech. In this way only can it arrive at a working solution of the nation's problems. If it takes advantage of a temporary triumph at the polls to convert itself into a gag or an impediment, men will have none of it. Parliament can only be defended as an immense convenience. It is not in itself sacrosanct. Men would be fools to throw away hastily the most convenient political instrument ever devised. But if even the most perfect instrument is misused and blunted and otherwise injured, there comes a time when it will be thrown on the scrap-heap. It is time for constitutionalists to take thought.

## XII

### *The Public Man*

IT is impossible to speak with the same voice in public as in private. It is physically impossible, but it is more than that—it is also artistically impossible. Queen Victoria used to complain that Gladstone—or was it Bright?—addressed her as though she were a public meeting. To address a public meeting as though one were talking to a private acquaintance would cause still deeper resentments. A public man cannot step down into such intimacy save at his peril. His thoughts on the platform are not entirely his own thoughts. He has measured them on a bed of Procrustes before allowing them to appear, and offers them to the public only in standard shapes and patterns. He is not necessarily insincere, but neither is he free to say all he believes. He speaks in a measure as a representative, a mouthpiece, an echo. He is almost more concerned to find out what other people think than what he himself thinks. His creed, if he is a more or less honest man, is some sort of a compromise between this and that. If he is a dishonest man, he thinks what he thinks the public thinks with uncompromising single-mindedness. In neither case does he claim, as a man of



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letters or a man of science claims, the right to free play of the mind. Not in public, at any rate. No statesman at the head of a great party in power could set down everything in his mind without fear or favour as Shelley, say, or Darwin did. That is why the literary temperament is so often hostile to the political. The man of letters wants to see a new world produced as though it were as simple a matter as writing a new poem. He regards statesmen like Sir Robert Peel as men who approach the great problems of society in the spirit of the old fellows who before the war used to go about the streets crying, "Old chairs to mend! Any old chairs to mend!" And, indeed, in the past there has been some justification for the attitude of the man of letters. The majority of statesmen have been little better than predestinate menders of old chairs; some of them cannot be said to have fulfilled even so positive a function as that. Anyhow, they have lived little in the world of ideas. A statesman is not in the nature of things allowed to dally with an idea until it has grown to maturity. He is not an originator, a sower of seed. His task is rather the application of other men's ideas on which the public has gradually accustomed itself to look without terror. It is often the function of the man of letters to terrify the public; it is the part of the statesman who comes after him to soothe it. When Thackeray got Ruskin to write a few articles on the elementary economics of justice for the *Cornhill Magazine*, so great was the terror of the public that the series had to be discontinued. In the course of time, however, they were published in the volume called *Unto this Last*, and by this time they have probably found their way into every bishop's



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palace in England. They may even be said to have found their way into the Statute Book. Who more than John Ruskin prepared the way for old age pensions and the more humane legislation of recent years, such as public men fifty or sixty years ago would have denounced as ruin and revolution ?

The man of letters is, as a rule, from half a century to two centuries ahead of the official statesman. Wordsworth is fuller of political wisdom for our day than William Pitt, and statesmen of the present century will learn more about statesmanship from Swift and Dr. Johnson than from Walpole and even Chatham. Goldsmith was quoted as good politics during Mr. Lloyd George's land campaign, and Sterne pleaded for the abolition of slavery more than a generation before it won the assent of a Prime Minister. What could be a more fascinating subject of research than the literary origins—or at least anticipations—of social and political changes ? One of the most inadvertently amusing passages in Fanny Burney's *Diary* is that in which she records that she had been reading *The Vicar of Wakefield* (which had just been published) and had been considerably shocked by some of the reformist tendencies of the book. Goldsmith, she wrote, " advances many very bold and singular opinions ; for example, he avers that murder is the sole crime for which death ought to be the punishment. He goes even farther, and ventures to affirm that all our laws in regard to penalties and punishments are *all* too severe. This doctrine might be contradicted from the very essence of our religion—Scripture ; for . . . in the Bible—in Exodus particularly—death is commanded by God Himself, for

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many crimes besides murder. But this author shows in all his works a love of peculiarity, and of making originality of character in others ; and therefore I am not surprised he possesses it himself." Fanny Burney herself, no doubt, belonged to the company of men of letters rather than of statesmen, but in her remarks on Goldsmith and capital punishment she spoke like a Home Secretary. " In Exodus particularly "—can we not see the argument pressed forward from the ministerial bench, eyeglasses waved in a gesture of conclusiveness ? I do not mean to suggest that Cabinet Ministers are much given to theology except when playing a tennis of perorations with the Kaiser, but their appeals to precedent and their excuses for the thing that is are scarcely more relevant. They think first and foremost of keeping some sort of order in the commonwealth, whereas the poetic mind is concerned rather with bringing about a better order in the commonwealth. The poets welcome the disturbance of ideas, whereas the statesmen are distressed by any sort of disturbance whatever. They may further it when in opposition, but when in power they possess themselves once more of the leading platitudes about law and order. Even a platitude, it may be maintained, is an act of homage to the intellect. It is the imitation of an idea. Perhaps it would be nearer the truth to describe it as the forlorn ghost of an idea. The public man goes on to the platform encompassed by a cloud of these ghosts. That is why the man of letters, who regards platitudes as snares and enemies of the soul, has in many centuries so unjustly railed against him.

It is not that the public man does not say many true

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things in the course of his speech-making. It is that his enemies suspect him of not seeking the truth for disinterested ends. His official platitude is simply an official attitude. If he speaks of justice, liberty, and democracy he speaks of them in such a way that they seem merely to be elements in the pomp of an official utterance. The public man is concerned not with infecting us with the passion for righteousness, but with making out a case. He will play upon our passion for righteousness in order to persuade us to accept his case, but his first object is to carry his policy through, and that policy is in the very nature of the case the result of a compromise with all manner of selfish interests and backstairs influences. It may be a noble policy or an ignoble policy ; in either event it must have come to terms with many vested interests as well as with the claims of the ideal before it is permitted to take its place in the programme of a political party. And the worst of public men is that they make almost the same sort of speech whether the policy they advocate is a good or a bad one. Scripture was lavished as freely on one side as on the other in the great debate on slavery. The public man always appears as the ally of virtue, the swordsman of liberty, the patron of God, the shocked disciple of the ideal. The shocked expression is one of the everlastingly indispensable requirements of the public man. A public man spends his life pretending to be shocked by the conduct of his opponents. We had a perfect example of this during the war in the reply of Dr. Solf, the German Colonial Minister, to Mr. Balfour. Dr. Solf's speech, in its smooth self-complacency—I mean national, not personal, self-complacency—reads

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almost like a parody on public oratory. To read it with any kind of detachment was to be amused by it as one is amused by the speeches of Sir Willoughby Patterne or of Broadbent. One rejoiced to find the eternal comedy of the pretentiousness of the public man in Dr. Solf's announcement that "Germany is the only Power which has definitely adopted the demilitarisation of Africa as one of her war aims," and that "the time must come when oppressed human nature will revolt against the false doctrines of hatred threatening to suffocate the innermost human affinities." But the comedy became almost too terrible, too Swiftian, when Dr. Solf went on to speak of all those German soldiers who lost their lives as

thousands to whom the sacrifice was a light thing, because they believed they were losing nothing, that out of the mountain of sorrow, out of all the want and pain, a better world would arise which would ensure a peace of safety to their children and children's children, and mutual goodwill between peoples.

Never did a satirist conceive an instance of irony more bitter than that a German statesman should expound the Prussian world-shambles in terms of a sentimental longing for a better world and goodwill among men. And yet we need not be too severe on Dr. Solf. That speech of his has been made on behalf of all bad causes from the beginning of the world—at least since the beginning of the government of the world by oratory. There is little oratory that has not an element of humbug in it. Every public man is to some extent an actor.

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He is lucky if he is not occasionally cast for the part of Tartuffe.

What, then, is the reasonable attitude to adopt to public men and politics? Are we to remain detached and self-righteous spectators, amused by the comedy of makebelieve? It is only a superficial mind that could think so. To be detached as regards some of the wilder fancies of partisanship is commendable enough, and men of letters will do well not to fetter their minds with the formulæ of this or that party. But there is little to be praised in the cynical air of superiority with which some people wash their hands of parties and group all public men together as public nuisances. After all, the public man is only nine-tenths a humbug. Behind all the give-and-take of *clichés* and platitudes and appeals to God and freedom, a very real war is being waged, and the cause for which the war is being waged is, without joking, the liberty of mankind. Which side is fighting for liberty one can rarely tell from the speeches, but there are other evidences. We test these by our own standards of principle or self-interest, and choose our flag, as the orators would say, accordingly. After all, the thinkers and the men of letters may originate ideas for a better world, but it is the public men to whom ultimately falls the task of giving effect to them. Hence a good man need not be ashamed of throwing himself into the wordy wars of party politics. Has not Burke in *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents* written the vindication<sup>ed</sup> of the party man for ever :

I remember an old scholastic aphorism which says,  
“ that the man who lives wholly detached from others

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must be either an angel or a devil." When I see in any of these detached gentlemen of our times the angelic purity, power, and beneficence, I shall admit them to be angels. In the meantime, we are born only to be men. We shall do enough if we form ourselves to be good ones. It is therefore our business carefully to cultivate in our minds, to rear to the most perfect vigour of maturity, every sort of generous and honest feeling that belongs to our nature. To bring the dispositions that are lovely in private life into the service and conduct of the Commonwealth ; so to be patriots, as not to forget we are gentlemen. To cultivate friendships, and to incur enmities. To have both strong but both selected—in the one, to be placable ; in the other, immovable. To model our principles to our duty and our situation. To be fully persuaded that all virtue which is impracticable is spurious ; and rather to run the risk of falling into faults in a course which leads us to act with effect and energy, than to loiter out our days without blame, without use. Public life is a situation of power and energy ; he trespasses against his duty who sleeps upon his watch as well as he that goes over to the enemy.

Burke's eloquence, it is amusing to remember, was directed against the formation of a sort of English national party which should stand self-righteously above party politics. His defence of party politics is as interesting to-day as it was in the reign of George III. Party politics and public men may be all that their severest critics say of them. But what alternative instruments have yet been devised for the furtherance of social well-being and the security of the liberties of men and

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women? At the same time, it is legitimate to look forward hopefully to a time when public men will be bold in ideas as well as in rhetoric. If this does not arrive quickly, indeed, there is a danger that European civilisation may platitudinise itself back into the chaos of the Dark Ages.



### XIII

#### *The Return of Good Humour*

THE world is crying out just now for a return of good humour. Few people know what it is that they want, but, as the common jest says, they won't be happy till they get it. One finds on all sides, however, a desire to get back from a world in which it was a duty to kill and a part of discipline to be rude. The purpose of war is to break the will of one's enemies. The means include, among other things, breaking the will of one's fellow-countrymen. During war we live in an atmosphere of drill-sergeants, and the drill-sergeant is seldom a disciple of the courtesies of Beau Nash. He swears, he bullies, he treats the men under him as though they were enemies of the human race. Even the soldier doing sentry duty has no time to waste on polite flourishes. He never says "please!" He is more likely to level his bayonet at you than to salute you. He is there to give orders, not to exchange compliments; and, if you do not submit your will to his, he has even, in certain circumstances, the right to put a bullet in you. Thus war may be described as a system of universal coercion in which the desire to charm or persuade your neighbours has to give way to the

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necessity of forcing them to obey orders. Society becomes a pyramid of tyrannies broad-based upon the people's submissiveness. The spirit of tyranny is, unfortunately, infectious, and it is entirely opposed to that spirit of good-humour which implies a certain ease as among equals. The war had not been going on long when the level of good-humour fell, as though the soul of the world had sprung a leak. Tyranny spread like the influenza. Bus conductors became tyrants. Railway porters became tyrants. Waiters became tyrants. Taxi-drivers became tyrants. Even grocers became tyrants. Some people imputed this to "nerviness" due to the shortage of fats. Men would be less tyrants, we were told, if they had more butter. A little butter is a dangerous thing. It may be, for all we know, that the tyrannies of which history tells have been largely the result of an inability to obtain or (alternatively) to digest fats. Many of the proverbs associate fat with good nature. I fancy, however, that even a fat man could not become a drill-sergeant without losing a little of his geniality. He would also, no doubt, lose a considerable amount of his fat, which might be the real cause of his deterioration. But, in any case, he could not remain sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, plump Jack Falstaff. He would become, instead, Sergeant Falstaff, a man of bitter words and a fiery eye. And war makes sergeants of us all. It makes our blood boil angrily against enemies, neutrals, and our fellow-countrymen alike. When the boiling-point is reached we call it patriotism.

After five years of boiling blood, it is by no means easy to recover our normal temperature again. Many

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people do not even regard it as desirable. They still want to settle everything in a rage. They have grown so accustomed to looking on rage as a virtue that they feel that they could not fall back into the good humour natural to sane human beings without sinking in the moral scale. They will not come down from their pedestals of wrath to mingle with the old easy-going crowd. They have learned to enjoy playing the part of Bombastes Furioso, and are not in the mood to retire from the limelight into the minor part of an ordinary Christian. People of this kind are happily in the minority. The bus conductor is no longer a murderer in his heart, as he (or she) was during the last two years of the war. There was a bus conductor—a lady—during the last year of the war who prevented a friend of mine from getting into a bus in which there was obviously room. Seeing her later at the terminus, he went up to reproach her indignantly. “Why did you prevent me from getting on that bus?” he demanded. She looked at him witheringly: “’Cause I didn’t like the look of you!” she replied. I cannot deny that his conspiratorial hat and well-fed appearance gave him the air of a Jesuit propagandist. But in peace-time it is not permitted to bus conductors to bully even those whom they suspect of being Jesuits. The most that is allowed them by way of insult is a stage aside or the innuendo of a tune whistled into the air. War changes the tone of popular insults. Malice takes the place of the cheerful impudence of the music-halls. Luckily, thousands of the soldiers never entirely lost the impudence of the music-halls, and, now that they have returned to civilian life, they are bringing back with them some of the old good-

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humour. A number of letters have appeared in the papers complaining of the behaviour of the drivers of motor-buses, and denouncing them as though they were demons. I cannot agree, however, that there is any ill-nature in the furious driving that is now so common in the streets. There is more in it of exhilaration than of rage. The bus-driver, it must be admitted, is not the most considerate of men to those who wish him to pull up elsewhere than at the orthodox stopping-places. But that is because he regards them as unjustifiably spoiling his sport. He does not hate them or try to run them down. He flies past them in the best of tempers. A year ago he would have wished to kill them. Even, however, if we take the sourest view of the behaviour of the drivers, the returning tide of good humour among the conductors more than makes up for it. The greatest asset of London has always been its good humour. It was the natural capital of Dickens and Charles Lamb. Lacking its good humour, it would be one of the most uninhabitable of cities. Who would live amid the buzz of eight million spites ?

We too easily forget that good humour is, after all, the crown and the most lasting of the virtues. There are no great vices save those which are the enemies of good humour, such as cruelty, meanness, and all forms of crabbed egoism. It is arguable, indeed, that when the great teachers of the world speak of "love" and "charity," they mean for the most part good humour or good nature. When we are told to love our enemies we regard it as an impracticable paradox, because we know that no man can love an enemy in the same sense in which he loves his children. It ought to be possible,

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however, even in one's relations with an enemy, never entirely to lose hold of good nature. History will record with delight ten thousand instances of good nature between enemies in the recent war, but of the still more numerous instances of ill-nature we can expect nothing better than a pleasureless palliation. When Paul the Apostle praised charity as the greatest of the virtues, he was but praising good nature in its highest form. This is not to diminish the other virtues. It is merely to emphasise the fact that without good humour even love of truth or love of country becomes half a vice. There is no use in pretending that good humour itself comprehends all the virtues. Just as courage without good humour is a body without a soul, so is good humour without courage a soul without a body—a vapour, a wandering nothing, a smile without a mouth. But it is good humour alone that makes the virtues sociable, and fit companions for men and children. Shakespeare was the dramatist of good humour as Mozart was its musician. Each of them saw with the profound wisdom of genius that all passions were waste that did not ultimately come to harbour in good humour. As early as *Romeo and Juliet*, and as late as *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*, Shakespeare wrote under the spell of that good nature that brings reconciliation out of hatred and crime. "Pardon's the word for all," says Cymbeline. It is the most conspicuous word in the ethics of Shakespeare. And has not Mozart moralised the end of even so comparatively trivial an opera as *The Seraglio* with that fine song containing the lines :

If I forget this noble deed  
May Heaven fail me in my need ?

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Good humour streams in these lines into a world hitherto ruled by hatred, revenge, and the desire of bloodshed.

It would be difficult to maintain that good humour is the presiding deity in all the great works of art. But it is unquestionable that the spirit of pity which leads to reconciliation has been conspicuously present in literature from the earliest time. Homer and Euripides were ennobled with it centuries before Shakespeare and Mozart. They never showed themselves greater than when they sorrowed with the sorrows of their country's enemies, as in the sixth book of the *Iliad* and *The Trojan Women*. Without pity literature would be no more than a savage's book of anecdotes, and pity is good humour's sad sister.

If any statesman wishes to deserve well of his country or the world just now he cannot do better than take as his chief aim the restoration of good humour to politics. It is not suggested that, in reply to the cry of suffering, he should assume a jaunty air and offer quips as a substitute for justice. Rather, he must discover the conditions on which human beings can live in good humour—in charity, as the Prayer Book says—with one another, and guide his politics accordingly. He must in the meanwhile feel good-humoured himself and not suspicious in presence of other countries and other classes than his own. He must not lose hold on his good nature as he thinks of Russians or Irishmen or working-men or Americans. There is no political problem which cannot be solved by good nature. Good nature, however, is the rarest of virtues, whether in the Press or in Parliament. We have rarely sufficient good nature even to give our opponent the benefit of a clear statement of his



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case. We want to condemn our opponents, not to understand them. Hence it is impossible to learn from the ordinary English newspaper what is happening in Russia, or why this or that body of workers has struck, or what kind of reception Mr. De Valera is getting in America. Instead, we get bitter and uninforming diatribes. How one longs for a good-humoured statement of facts, even if they seem to cast a doubt on some of one's own conclusions ! But the fact of the matter is, we have not the good humour to face facts. Hence the misunderstandings between nations and between classes. The basest sorts of journalism and politics thrive on such misunderstandings, and they are hardly likely to abandon their trade. The good-humoured, on the other hand, are often nervous of giving offence to the ill-humoured, just as nine people out of ten give way to a bad-tempered man. And so the ill-humoured have far more than their fair share in the government of the world. They frighten ordinary people, including governments. The world will not be saved till the good-humoured people organise. And then, when they are strong, will they themselves not feel ill-humoured against the ill-humoured people ? If they do, all is lost. There is no tyranny so dead that revenge will not bring it to life again. An ill-humoured proletariat would be but a many-headed re-incarnation of an ill-humoured despot.



#### XIV

### *The Importance of Forgetting History*

IT would be an excellent thing if on at least one day in the year human beings could forget that they are a race with a past. There is much to be said for having a past, but we are too apt to shuffle along groaning under it, like an old woman under a heavy sack. We carry not only our pedigree but our sins about with us. And not only our own sins, but our fathers' and our grandfathers' and our great-grandfathers' sins. We scarcely feel free to move, with this infernal hump of misery on our shoulders. We accustom ourselves to travelling at a snail's pace, and we come in the end to regard this as evidence of wisdom. The conservative instinct which is strong in all of us is mainly a sort of pride in the burden that is weighing us down. "Throw it into the ditch," says the revolutionist, "and you will be able to walk faster." The conservative opens his eyes nervously and clutches his load the tighter. He has become attached (in every sense) to his burden. To him it is something more than a weight : it is a weight of glory. It includes the family tree as well as the family skeleton, and it is stuffed with achievements to a still greater extent than with failures. Even for the failures,

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however, he has a fondness. They are an integral part of his treasures, and, besides this, they have acquired a mellow richness with age as bad old pictures do. The idea of laying so precious a burden down merely in order to be able to walk faster seems to the conservative as mad a thing as ever entered the head of Simple Simon. It would be like a rich man's committing suicide in order to save the cost of living. To the conservative—I do not use the word in the party sense—the chief object in life is not to advance quickly towards anywhere in particular, but to keep close to his sack of treasures. If he is permitted he will stay where he is, and, if he moves at all, he prefers to move slowly backwards, sack on shoulders, towards a Golden Age of reaction. To the revolutionist such a man seems to be as mad and selfish as a miser among his coins. The revolutionist will never be at rest while there is a lost continent of Atlantis to discover. He, too, may be trying to recover something out of the past, but he at least wishes to go swiftly in search of it, free from the impediments of tradition.

Probably everybody will agree that the human race is immensely a debtor both to its conservative and its revolutionary instincts. To the former it owes its fortune of memories, its tradition of manners ; to the latter it owes all those desperate speculations which led men to hoist a sheet of cloth and allow the wind to blow them out to the unknown parts of the sea, and which assured them that one day they would be able to fly between the clouds and the stars and to live without fear in the same world—even in the same house—with a voting woman. Legends such as that of Icarus are tales told by conservatives about revolutionists. They are in

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a large measure true tales. They are awful warnings, and there are few awful warnings which history has not fulfilled again and again. The history of the French Revolution was, from one point of view, merely a new version of the story of Icarus. To the conservative it is an immortal argument against permitting such things to recur. He has added the history of the French Revolution to his load of precedents. He treasures it as a check on faith. He would slay the faith of the young and imprudent with a story about guillotines. He cannot resist a certain feeling of satisfaction when M. Trotsky foreshadows the re-erection of the guillotine in Russia. It pleases him that even revolutions should act according to precedent. There would be something unseemly to his mind in breaking away from the examples of history. I confess I have the greatest reverence for history, but I do not believe in making oneself a slave to it in this fashion. Why need we be so certain that the same thing is going to happen over and over and over again? When the Germans were advancing in Poland in the second year of the war, we were reminded by the historical that Napoleon had advanced into Russia a hundred years ago, and that the further he had advanced the further he had progressed along the road to ruin. This we were asked to accept as an omen for the present time. What had happened to Napoleon was bound to happen to the Germans. Even the Germans could not, it was thought, have the indecency to violate a notable chapter of history. It was generally forgotten that to fight Russia from Berlin in an age of railways was a very different matter from fighting Russia from Paris in an age in which armies had to depend on oxen and

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mules for transport. The parallel in Napoleonic times was near enough to be interesting, but it was not near enough to be worth building on. Nor is there anything to be gained from drawing too close a parallel just now between the French and the Russian Revolutions while the direction the latter is going to take is still uncertain. The only reasonable faith for the supporter of a revolution that is still in progress is that it is going to be unlike any other revolution. It would scarcely be worth beginning a revolution unless the revolutionists believed this. Every revolution in the past has failed to accomplish the best that was hoped from it because the mass of human beings are as changeable as the wind, and because the constant will of those who are determined to keep what they have outstays the inconstant will of those who have been disturbed out of the commonness of their days by the gleam of a visionary world. It is easier for human beings to keep going on the ground than in the air. We are creatures of prose and property. Human nature, it has been said, like water, seeks its lowest level. According to the cynics, it will always do so. The cynic makes a generalisation of the world's disappointments and sets it up as a law. He rejoices in the failures of history as though they were successes of his own wit. He would like to write across the future a jeering "I told you so." For the future has no secrets from him: it is simply the past coming in at the other side of the stage. The historian will perhaps quarrel with us for associating him with the cynic. He will deny that the cynical interpretation of history is either the only one or the true one. He will remind us that history is a book of golden deeds as well as a catalogue of a thousand and one fiascos. He

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will justly protest that to scorn the lessons of history is to scorn the lessons of experience and is the act of a greenhorn rather than of an intelligent idealist. I will concede this: I do not wish to dispute with those who find in history a lesson. I object only to those who find in it an infallible prophecy. Let us by all means have every historical parallel we can imagine, but let us remember also that in real life nothing ever happens twice and that circumstances alter the best of parallels. To forget this is the worst kind of fatalism. It is to believe not merely in destiny but in doom. No one who held such a belief could ever commit himself whole-heartedly to a cause. He would regard his cause as defeated before he had lifted a hand to help it. He would see the future spread out before him, a broken image of man's desires, and, though he might be filled with pity, he could hardly be filled with enthusiasm. No one could feel enthusiastic for the Russian Revolution if he believed it was going to be simply a replica of the French Revolution. In fact, it was only when people began to be unenthusiastic about the Russian Revolution that they began to talk much about the French parallel. Clearly the Russians may very well learn a great deal from their French forerunners, but the one thing they would be mad to learn would be the necessity of their ultimate failure. They can avoid failure by avoiding the causes of failure. Revolutions have failed in the past because, like despotisms, they have left people feeling more insecure instead of more secure. The only revolution that can last is the revolution that brings security. It is manifestly a most difficult thing to achieve on the morrow of a general unsettlement. But history warns us that

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without it even the most promising revolution will have to make way at least temporarily for some Napoleon or Bourbon to take his turn at government. To read this warning in history need not depress revolutionists. It is not a prophecy of disaster, but a reminder that the faith of doctrinaires is not enough. To this must be added the faith of builders and collaborators and reconcilers.

It is not, however, in regard to the Russian Revolution that the drawers of historical parallels seem to me most capable of evil just now. The cynics are already hard at work suggesting that, as there is no precedent for a successful League of Nations, a real League of Nations now has no chance of coming into being. They feel that, however horrible they may seem at the time, all wars are conducted and ended with a certain decorum, and that the only decorous ending to a modern European war is something on the lines of the Congress of Vienna. That is respectable : it has happened before. Compared with it, the League of Nations is an idealistic parvenu. I do not say that all who disbelieve in the coming of the League of Nations have this snobbish regard for precedent. They acquiesce in precedents rather than idolise them. They would as soon believe in a League of Nations as not. All that is the matter with them is that they are slaves of the accomplished fact, and among the millions of accomplished facts which are recorded in history there is no mention of a League of Nations. There are, no doubt, hints and preliminary sketches of such a League in various international agreements of the past. But history quite definitely informs us that a true democratic congress and covenant of the nations has



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never yet existed. It is unprecedented, and the chronicle of past events no more justifies us in expecting its establishment than the sixteenth century was justified in expecting the birth of Shakespeare. Like the appearance of Shakespeare, indeed, the League of Nations will be a miracle, a breach with the past, a contradiction of previous history. But, like the coming of Shakespeare, it will be a miracle within the range of human achievement. Perhaps, in appealing to the precedent of Shakespeare, we may ourselves be accused of appealing to history. And, indeed, no doubt we are. Our momentary distaste for history is only for the sort of history to which old men go in search of a bad example. History of this kind is a curse, a blight upon action. When we think of the ignorance of history which is its usual alternative, however, we find ourselves suddenly appalled. As so often, we find ourselves transfixed on the point of horror between two extremes. What can one suggest? Perhaps the best thing that could happen would be that those who are ignorant of history should read it, and that those who have read it should forget it. Let us scrap history on at least the first day of the year in so far as it binds us to the past, with all its savagery and its beastliness. History is not fit to be read unless by those who realise that it is a branch of indecent literature.



*After All We Said*

THERE are not many characteristics of human beings that are likely to turn a cynic into a bubbling optimist. One of the few, I think, is the way in which they go on hoping that other human beings will abide by their pledges. Every day, god-fathers promise to see that unoffending infants are brought up Christians, wives promise to love, honour, and obey their husbands, statesmen promise to make the enemies of their country pay, coal-merchants promise to deliver coal, premiers promise a country fit for heroes to live in, children promise to go to sleep at once, journalists promise to be in time with their copy, and burglars promise to reform if they are given a chance. It is clear that a great deal of importance is attached to the act of promising. Otherwise, everybody would not be always doing it or compelling other people to do it. The Church will not baptize you or marry you without a promise. You cannot get into the Army or Parliament or on to a jury without a promise. The only people who take no stock in promises seem to be money-lenders. They pretend to be Simple Simons in their advertisements ; but, if you take them at their

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word, you will find that they will send an extremely unpleasant person to have a look at your furniture, with a greasy document which you will have to sign at the place marked X. Most of us despise money-lenders, but are they not, after all, the real experts in human nature, they and the pawnbrokers? To a pawnbroker your pledge does not mean your word : it means your watch or your dress-suit. There is no use in going to a pawnshop and asking for the loan of a ten-pound note, saying : " May the tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I do not pay you back on the Greek Kalends ! " The pawnbroker is a realist ; he will, to judge by the awful spectacle of his shop-window, take almost any pledge from you so long as it does not come out of your vocabulary ; he knows the value of words better than a poet, and he knows that he would be as poor as a poet if he put his trust in words in the same foolish way. I confess I love the poets more than the pawnbrokers, but I am compelled to admit that it is the pawnbrokers rather than the poets who have usually been justified by events. The pawnbrokers alone have not been disillusioned ; it is the poets whom we find writing *Books of Lamentations*.

At the present moment we are living amid the ruins of a world of promises and professions—ruins disastrous beyond any that were ever produced by earthquake or any natural catastrophe. It now seems like something happening in a far-off world, when the democracies went to war merely because a great nation had broken a pledge. A broken pledge seemed in those days a remarkable curiosity, like a great auk's egg, or a two-headed calf, or a bearded lady. Photographs were

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taken of it and exhibited on the hoardings. Barnum and Bailey never had an exhibit that enjoyed a thousandth part of the success of the "scrap of paper." A broken word—nobody living had ever seen anything like it before. A few wizened old men who fumbled among the dust of the University libraries discovered that something similar had happened among the steatopygous inhabitants of a Saharan city that had been a desert of lizards and giant ferns since the year one. As for those of us who had no archæological learning, we could only gasp incredulously. Never had the world been shaken by such a rage of public virtue. Even sclerotic party politicians began to go about with the air of prophets booming against Tyre and Sidon. If we never had been virtuous before, we were virtuous now. We annexed Heaven itself and clambered up on to the pillars of the glittering gates, blowing trumpets that only angels are supposed to blow. And the worse the enemy became, the better we felt. Mr. Lloyd George, it is said, really persuaded himself that he was either one of the Twelve Apostles or an unusually distinguished Archangel. Haloes were handed round at Cabinet meetings, and worn even by the man that kept the minutes. It was rumoured that the editor of the *Morning Post* himself was caught trying one on. Mr. Bottomley wrote an article in a Sunday paper, "How to be Happy in a Halo." Spirit of Schopenhauer, had you but returned to our earth in those happy days, you would have thrown away your pessimism, as a poor man who has come into a fortune throws away a pair of trousers with a hole in the seat ! Mr. Bonar Law is not exactly a merry grig, but even he said, on the outbreak

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of the Russian Revolution, that to be alive was very heaven. What the rival angels in Paradise thought of our antics there is no means of knowing, but they must have shivered for their salaries. We professed a code of morals as thunderously strict as any that is known beyond the stars. We said that lying was unthinkable ; that inhumanity was unthinkable ; that the domination of the strong over the weak was unthinkable ; that hatred and greed were unthinkable ; that even our own old world was unthinkable. And we certainly promised a new world, either directly or by implication, as soon as we could get rid of the incubus—I think that was the word—of Prussian militarism. Had the young men and the workers been pawnbrokers in spirit, they might have asked statesmen for pledges more substantial and less apt to disappear than winged words. They inclined to poetry, however, and found it easier to believe than to disbelieve. They did not realise that, in these prodigious matters, an ordinary statesman could not keep his word without losing himself. He is what his past has made him—a man who regards it as his job, not to create a new world, but with the help of glue and sticking-plaster and balls of string to keep the old world from falling to pieces. His idea of a law is something to mend a crack, a piece of paper to thrust into a hole in the window. If this now seems to be a cracked world, it is because the statesmen prefer a cracked world to a sane one. But why, during the war, did they trouble to pretend otherwise ? Why did they call in the aid of propagandists to commit them to so vast professions of democracy, chivalry, liberty, equality, fraternity, and what not ?

## *After All We Said*

There were, I admit, a few cynics even in that golden age of virtue who warned us not to take the professions of statesmen too seriously. They even warned us not to take ourselves too seriously. Every time a crime was committed by the enemy, they retorted to our indignation with the remark that, in the same circumstances, we should have committed exactly the same crime ourselves. This naturally served only to double our indignation, for we were now indignant for our own sake as well as for virtue's. When Germany invaded Belgium, they shrugged their shoulders and asked us if England, too, would not in comparable circumstances subordinate the rights of a small nation to her own in a life-and-death struggle. Pro-Allies replied with a furious, "No." When Germany began to practise frightfulness, they asked us if England, too, with her troops in the heart of a hostile population, might not resort to frightfulness as a preventive of worse things and so, in the last analysis, a humane measure. We again replied with an angry "No." They told us that, had England been in Germany's position, she would have gone in for unrestricted submarine warfare, the bombing of open towns, and all the rest of it. The only German crime, indeed, of which they did not accuse the allied nations of being potentially guilty was the abandonment of typhus-stricken patients in a prison-camp. Our attitude to the cynics, however, was adamant. They were so few and so unpopular that they had not even an organ in the daily Press. The rest of us sternly told them that there were some things of which, in no imaginable circumstances, decent men would be capable. We held up an absolute standard of virtue, and we averred that

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no nation could depart from it on any excuse without branding itself with eternal infamy. The cynics laughed at our heroics. But even the cynics did not dare to warn us that, before the cock crew thrice, we should have Amritsar. That bloody shambles of an unarmed mob, where the wounded were left to writhe in their agony on the ground, those public floggings before women, those humiliating compulsions to crawl on all fours along the street and to touch the ground with the forehead—punishments more degrading to the inflicter than to the victim—those public gallows, the flagellation of schoolboys concerning whom Lieut.-Colonel Macrae said: "They need not necessarily have been guilty, but it was their misfortune"—any Englishman would have said you lied, if, during the war to save the weak from the strong, you had foretold that awful story of which a small part was made real to us by the photographs in the *Daily News*. Many would even now say that the camera lied, if it were not that all the worst part of the story comes from the lips of those who are the chief characters in it and its chief apologists. Had the cynics foretold, again, the present régime of Lord French in Ireland, a régime which is in itself an outrage, you and I would have said: "Impossible. We no longer live in the age of Elizabeth." And whose fault is it chiefly that our optimistic assurance has proved false? It is, I believe, mainly the fault of statesmen who in the event have proved false to every principle for which they asked the free peoples of the world to fight. The statesmen have, in the vulgar phrase, let us down. The world has been cheated of the justice it desired, and, until we get statesmen with a sense of honour, truth, and

*After All We Said a mouthful*

justice, we can expect little but a duel of bitterness and crime between race and race, between class and class. To this point have we now all but come. The brazen years return. After all we said, too ! . . . Spirit of Schopenhauer, rest at peace in your grave ; it seems that you were right.



*The Folly of Being Disappointed*

THOSE who think badly of the world have certainly all the arguments on their side. At least so one judges as one reads the daily paper. The governing classes and the criminal classes are, both of them, busy, and the newspaper gives us little but column after column of their misdeeds. If one wishes to escape from the general taint of crime, one has to turn to the racing news or the article by the poultry expert. The rest is all murder and disaster. Occasionally, there is something that appeals to one's sense of humour, such as the spasmodic rise and fall in the price of coal. It is more like a Jack-in-the-box than anything else. When the workers complain, down sinks the price to a decent level. The owners complain in their turn, the lid is opened, and up jumps the price again. The one stable feature in the situation is that the coalowners always make an immense profit. In this respect, however, other industries are equally fortunate. One may dilute beer till it is as weak as water, and whiskey till it is rather weaker, and one may make them all but inaccessible to the general public, but it is only the public that suffers. The brewer and the distiller do not suffer.

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Drink may be cheap or dear, weak or strong, scarce or abundant. It is all the same to the brewer and the distiller. I am confident that they are the people who would benefit most by prohibition. They are the unsinkable ship of the industrial world. They could float somehow even in tap water. In their gift for turning to their own advantage all the winds that blow, with little enough regard for the interests of their fellow-men, they are typical of the influences that have taken control out of the hands of the idealists since the winning of the war. They represent private interest, not public spirit. They can hardly see an inch beyond self-enrichment. Not that the idealists were ever in control in public affairs any more than in the breweries. But, during the war, public men undoubtedly flattered the idealists as they had never done before, and hinted that there was a great change coming. Alas, it has turned out to be not a change of heart, but merely a change of face. No sooner did the dread of the German plague disappear than Allied statesmen threw their Bibles and *Utopias* out of the window. They had promised to take advantage of the first peaceful interlude to reconstruct the world. Instead of this, they merely regarded it, when it came, as a blessed relief from an atmosphere of unnatural goodness. When the German retreat from the Marne began, Lord Fisher has told us, Kitchener said to Lord Roberts: "Someone has been praying." When one looks at the world to-day, one feels that someone must have forgotten to pray. None of the eggs of goodness, justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity that were laid during the war has been hatched. Not many at least. They are, most of them, now treated as addled.

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It is true that in Poland and Bohemia two sturdy cockerels have been born. But even before they are full-grown the Allies have begun to train them to fight, and have precipitated them into the cockpit against Russia. As for the rest of the eggs, they proved to be useless, even for election purposes. They became discredited so that even Colonel John Ward, speaking of the objections of the Czecho-Slovaks to the Koltchak dictatorship, could write disdainfully: "The Czechs had just inaugurated their National Republican Government, and were naturally obsessed with the usual Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity business." Truly, the "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity business" is not what it used to be when French propagandists taught us that it was the great object of the war. When we find an honest English Radical preferring a dictator—and such a dictator!—to the "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity business," we get a measure of how the whole framework of public virtue has collapsed.

But we get a more exact measure of it in the ruthless Peace itself, and in the lead which it has given to the instinct of repression during the last year all the world over. In both hemispheres men are actively repressing those who differ from them, whenever they dare. In America Socialist members are summarily turned out of the Assembly of the State of New York, and agitation is treated as a crime. In Ireland the mad dogs of Dublin Castle bite not only Sinn Feiners, but even such of their own officials as plead that reaction should go no further than it does at present. In Hungary ladies of fashion go out to see Communists hanged—poor Communists who did not understand that the proper place

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for the new world is in a peroration, and thought that it could be translated into practical politics. One reads of men being shot in Spain, in Germany, in Syria, of women and children starving in Austria and Russia. Look where we may, there are few signs of peace, fewer of justice. Even atrocities have not ceased since the war. They have merely passed into private hands, as we see in story after story of violence and murder. The world has often been compared to a Devil's cauldron, and it can seldom have looked more like it than at present. And yet statesmen seem never to ask themselves whether the fires that are causing the trouble can be discovered and extinguished. They can think only in terms of private interest. During the war they said that all private interests must be subordinated to the general good. Since the war ended they have taken the line that the general good must be subordinated to the private interests, or, rather, that the private interests and the general good are inseparable. If they had said during the last year, "At all costs we must have houses," just as they said during the war, "At all costs we must have shells," does anyone doubt that even by now they could have built most of the houses that are needed? But the Government says, "at all costs" about only one thing—the protection of private capital against the competition of the State. If the spirit of "at all costs" were applied to securing for every honest citizen justice, a good house, and a good chance in the world, does anyone think that we should be living, as we do, under the constant threat of strikes? According to the *Daily Telegraph*, the workers agitate for higher wages without regard to the question whether the industries in which

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they are occupied can afford these, and they do this only because they are under an illusion that the State has a "bottomless purse" out of which any deficit can be made up. The very opposite is, in my opinion, the case. The workers are angry because they know that, though the purse is not bottomless, a few privileged men are taking more than their fair share out of it. It is strange to observe how many people who are scandalised by the movement for higher wages are not even ruffled by the scandal of shipping profits.

Others, however, seeing the all but universal triumph of greed, are not only shocked, but driven down into depths of depression. They think that once more the good cause has perished, and Caiaphas and Pilate are left to rule the world. This is weakness and folly. The good cause is in no more danger to-day than it has been at any time during the last two thousand years. Eminent goodness has always failed to control the government of the world. High ideals do not usually express themselves by capturing the political machine. They may aim at this, as Mazzini did, but they are sure to fail. They will fail, it is to be feared, in whatever they attempt, for it is the average man, as much as the idealist, who sets the pace. The success of the idealist is not to make the average man advance at as quick a pace as himself, but to persuade him to advance a little faster than he was moving before. Christ was a failure only in so far as the world destroyed him and he left no Christs behind him. He must be accounted a success if he has made more men what is called Christlike than would have been so if he had never lived. The virtue of Socrates, again, did not pass with him from the earth.

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He has made little enough impression on the human race, but he has added to the store of wisdom and moral grandeur upon which men can draw even to-day. All the great causes—both those that have failed and those that have succeeded—are active agents in the life of the world. Life untouched by them is as unthinkable as life without sun and rain. All these things are a part of our inheritance, and the influences that have made us go back to Adam. The Greek love of liberty perished, choked by the Greek love of tyranny, but the Greek love of liberty, though it failed, has survived as a shaper of politics in the soul of man. The passion for justice among nations, which was the inspiration of multitudes yesterday, has been discredited in high places. But only those who expect a new world in a week need be disappointed. The passion for justice will outlive any statesman that God has yet created. It may ebb as the sea ebbs, but it will return. Whether it can ever rise to such a height as to blot out all injustice on the face of the earth is a question that need not trouble us. One can believe in perfect justice without believing in the perfectibility of man. Philosophers will possibly suggest that there is a definite limit set in nature both to the ebbing and to the rising of the tide, and that it is the part of a wise man, not to waste his breath in encouraging the incoming tide with shouts, but to watch the coming and the going of the waves as an interested but unexcited spectator. It may be, however, that our wills and emotions and longings are all part of the tide that makes for human progress. We do not know how high it can rise, but we know that, if all human beings were suddenly to become indifferent to it, it would

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become as the Dead Sea. Hence we do well, perhaps, to summon the ebbing tide to return. We certainly do well to exult when the waters begin to rise and to leap forward as if they would overwhelm the land.



## XVII

### *The Truth about Corruption*

“**C**ORRUPTION,” says the writer of “Musings Without Method” in *Blackwood’s Magazine*, “has ever been the besetting sin of democracy.” This is one of those statements which express a prejudice rather than a fact. We often hear the same charge made against republics. The truth of the matter is, of course, that corruption is a besetting sin, not specially of democracy or of republics, but of human nature. Human nature presents us with an extraordinary motley of the sons of God and the sons of Belial whether under a republic or an empire or a limited monarchy. It would be absurd to pretend that a race of absolutely disinterested persons has ever existed under any form of government that has yet been discovered. But certainly nothing in history leads one to believe that men have become less disinterested with the growth of democratic institutions. Corruption, I grant, is a very vague word, and exceedingly difficult to define. Thus, for instance, it used to be a common thing for country electors to have to vote as their landlords bade them. Electors more happily circumstanced and able to vote as they pleased had the liberty to sell

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their votes for money, and, it is to be feared, frequently did so. It is probable that the landlords regarded the second sort of electors as hopelessly corrupt and the former as sturdy patriots who were merely doing their duty. Corruption takes place, from this point of view, only when money, as people say, "changes hands." On the other hand, it is obvious that, while the one elector may have voted for a bribe, the other, too, received a price for his vote in the greater security of his livelihood. There is no more of the spirit of disinterestedness in the elector who is driven to the poll like a frightened sheep than in the elector who frankly sells his vote to the highest bidder. Both of them are, in the last analysis, corrupt. Neither kind of elector, however, is tolerable in a modern democracy, and so we find both the corruption of the intimidated and the corruption of the purchasable discouraged by the most severe penalties. As a result, it is probable that in modern England—that is, in England during the most democratic period that it has known—there is less corruption at election times than at any time in the past.

Those who take pleasure in accusing democracy of corruption ought, one imagines, to have been given pause by the recent revelations about Rasputin. Rasputin was neither a democrat nor the citizen of a democratic country. On the contrary, he was the citizen of the most autocratically-governed country among the Great Powers of Europe. Yet this did not save him from a hideousness of corruption such as has never been surpassed in any democracy known to history. He seems to have been the salesman of honours in the Russian Empire. He seems also to have aspired

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to become the salesman of Russia's honour. It is not denied that he took bribes from Germany. To sell promotion for money is demoralising enough ; to be ready to sell one's country for money is the uttermost infamy of which a citizen is capable. The example of Rasputin is sufficient to show that, in order to abolish corruption, something more than the abolition of democracy is necessary. And the example of Turkey under Abdul Hamid points the same moral. Corruption has never held the same sway in any modern democracy as in Russia and Turkey. Charles the Second, again, was one of the corruptest of English monarchs, accepting even the money of the French king ; and yet democracy was not rampant in England in those days. History, however, is full of examples of men under all forms of governments who loved money more than they loved the public good. Man is by nature a purchasable animal, and nothing but a code of disinterestedness as binding as a religion can preserve him from temptations to self-seeking at the public expense. Some of the greatest names in history are associated in one's memory with charges of corruption. Even so high-souled a patriot as Demosthenes was found guilty of having accepted money for changing his policy in regard to the admission of Harpalus, Alexander's runaway treasurer, into Athens. Having opposed the reception of Harpalus on the ground that it might be made a cause of war, he is said afterwards to have been greatly enamoured of a golden cup of Persian manufacture which was among the stolen goods the fugitive had brought with him. Weighing the cup in his hand, and surprised to find it so heavy, he asked Harpalus what weight it " came to."

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“It shall,” said Harpalus, with a smile, “come to you with twenty talents.” Demosthenes fell to the bribe. When the question of admission was next raised in the Assembly, he appeared with his throat bandaged and pretended, when called on to speak, that he had lost his voice. It has been doubted whether Demosthenes was guilty of the crime of which he was convicted. If he was, his error stands in curious contrast to the fine disinterestedness and astonishing moral energy of the rest of his life. One would single him out, for instance, as naturally a far more disinterested man than Bacon. Bacon, in comparison with Demosthenes, was a time-server, a courtier. He was no champion of a lost cause. He was a worldling, with a desire (no doubt) to reform the world but also to take advantage of the world. His corruption, however, it seems likely enough, was not corruption of the worst sort. It was conventional corruption, like the acceptance of a Christmas present from a commercial traveller. He lived in a time when judges took tips like modern waiters. It is a dangerous practice, especially when the judges accept their tips, as Bacon sometimes did, before the case is decided. Bacon denied strenuously that he had ever perverted justice for a bribe. The worst he could say of himself was that he might “be frail, and partake of the abuse of the times.” And, indeed, one litigant denounced him for having taken his money while his suit was going on and then having decided against him. The judge who accepts a bribe on false pretences is to be commended for his cunning, but is he so very much honester than the judge who is at least faithful to the litigant who bribes him? He is something of a thief in both cases.

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At the same time, it is better in the public interest that he should be a thief in the Baconian school than in the fashion of those judges whose verdicts are for sale. On the whole, Robespierre and Marat—Robespierre whose incorruptibility has been made a sneer and a reproach, and Marat who was content to live on bread and water—do not lose anything by comparison with men so little inclined to democracy, in our sense of the word, as Bacon and the Duke of Marlborough. Nor, whatever the faults of recent English Parliaments, does any of them fail to look like a parliament of angels in contrast to the House of Commons in the days when under Sir Robert Walpole every man had his price and got it.

The critics of democracy, however, apparently do not venture to affirm that the bribing of judges and Members of Parliament is as common in democratic England as it was in an England in which kings liked to fancy themselves ruling by divine right. "Political corruption," says the writer in *Blackwood's* rather vaguely, "takes many forms. By far the simplest and least dangerous method is to rob the till." He does not go on, as he surely ought to have done in the interests of public integrity, to give specific instances of the till having been robbed in recent times, "simple" though he declares the process to be. Surely, if it were so simple, at least one instance—I mean an instance involving a leading politician—would have come to light in this wicked world. Modern corruption, it seems, ultimately resolves itself into little more than Old Age Pensions and the bestowal of titles on large contributors to party funds. "The purchase of votes with public money" is denounced. "Pensions," we are told in explanation,

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“ have been granted with a lavish hand, or promised with a deceptive tongue.” To describe a measure of simple justice of this kind as corruption seems to me to destroy the meaning of words. If the introduction of Old Age Pensions incidentally helps to make the party responsible for it popular, that is an evil inseparable from the passage of any measure which a large section of the public wants. Certainly the recognition of the right of the aged poor to five or ten shillings a week at seventy seems to me the least corrupting in its effects of any gifts from the public wealth of which one has ever heard. Pericles has been accused of corruption because he obtained a grant of “ festival-money ” for the aged poor to enable them to buy seats in the theatre. But the fame of Pericles has survived the charge. The system of doles of corn and money at Rome, on the other hand, had an indisputably corrupting influence. It meant that large numbers of people, instead of adding to the common stock by their labour, were encouraged to live in idleness. One may safely affirm, however, that no single human being in the prime of manhood has worked an hour the less or a foot-pound the less because he has seen before him the prospect of a five-shilling pension at the age of seventy. As for the pretence that the sale of honours is one of the peculiar sins of democracy, no one with any knowledge of history could maintain such a thing. The object of James I in instituting the order of baronets was, frankly, to raise money by the sale of honours. Each baronet had to pay £1095 for his title—a sum supposed to cover the pay of thirty soldiers during three years while engaged in the subjection of Ulster. In Charles I’s reign, we are told,



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blank patents for baronetcies were put on the market at £350 or £400. I am not concerned at present with the rights or wrongs of the sale of honours. I merely wish to protest against the suggestion that in the old days kings and their favourites were on all occasions disinterested servants of the commonwealth, while the modern world is by comparison a market-place of shame run by greedy hucksters in their own interest. Kings, as well as parties, are but human, and have bribed men with honours to serve them rather than the State. The world, to say truth, is a corrupt island—a tainted orange, or pear, or whatever shape it may be. Public spirit burns with but an intermittent flame in most of us. The love of money, the love of power, and other forms of egoism are notorious seducers of men in all climates and under all constitutions. But to say that democracy breeds corruption is nonsense. One might as well say that it breeds adultery or bad language, or any other old-established vice.



## XVIII

### *The Moral Case Against Prohibition*

**I**T is rather alarming to find a great many people, even among those who habitually drink wine or beer with their meals, acquiescing in the view that in the prohibition controversy all the moral arguments are on one side. They are so deeply impressed by the number of evils that do undoubtedly flow from the flowing bowl that they have come, almost unconsciously, to regard drink as an absolute evil in itself, and to believe, as a result, that its suppression would be an absolute good. Hence, though they drink alcohol, they will not defend it. They hope in a vague way that America will prohibit it but that England won't, so that they may enjoy the thrilling spectacle of virtue triumphant "as far away as New York is" and at little cost to themselves. They do not mean to become teetotallers, but they would dearly love to become teetotallers by proxy. Hence the case against prohibition is left almost entirely in the hands of licensed victuallers and of literary idealisers of the Middle Ages.

The licensed victuallers, the brewers, and the distillers are obviously biassed in the matter. What they want is to preserve their trade at all costs ; and,

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when they attempt to make out a case for themselves on higher grounds, they show themselves as expert in cant as the most extreme of their opponents. During the war the brewers and the prohibitionists issued a number of manifestos and counter-manifestos in the advertisement columns of the English Press. If the advertisements of the prohibitionists drove one into sympathy with the wildest excesses of Robert Burns, the advertisements of the brewers made one involuntarily exclaim : " O for a beaker full of lukewarm barley-water, with no beaded bubbles winking at the brim ! " There is a cant of wine and a cant of water, and cant will spoil the flavour of the mellowest Chambertin as well as of the crystal stream. If there is a case against prohibition, it assuredly does not arise from the fact that the brewers are noble, disinterested public servants who pay more for the defence of their country than Methodist ministers. The medievalist defence of liquor is more attractive ; but it, too, is rather suspect to the ordinary citizen. It seems to spring from a riotous and chaotic philosophy, a sort of heresy of jollity that deliberately blinds itself to some of the most difficult problems of society. It is a dramatic gesture against Puritanism rather than the rational affirmation of a way to Utopia. One would certainly not gather from it that there is a tragedy as well as a comedy of liquor. The average man who has seen, whether in his own family or in the families of his friends, only too many instances in which liquor has been the instrument of doom, has no patience with the jolly worship of the tankard. He regards it with amusement as a game of the young men, but he is inclined to wonder whether,

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after all, the Americans who prohibit the thing altogether are not more seriously facing the facts of the situation.

I do not believe it is possible to meet the case for prohibition unless we are willing to face the facts of the prohibitionists at their worst. It is an appalling fact that not a night passes in this country in which a considerable number of men fail to treat their wives with blackguardly violence as the result of drunkenness. Alcoholism leads to crime ; it leads to disease ; it leads to poverty ; it leads often to degeneracy in the next generation. At least, it aids and abets in all these things. Anyone who has ever seen a home wrecked by alcoholism must have felt like cursing the day on which the use of fermented liquor was discovered by man. It is a natural thought with many people in such circumstances : " Put an end to the accursed thing and all will be well." The careworn faces of impoverished children, of women fearing the disgrace of the home, of a family waiting for the crash to come—if these things could be cured by prohibition, why, who would not be willing to pay the price ? If one can drink only at the expense of such mournful misery, it would be a relief to abstain. No realist has ever painted the miseries caused by alcoholism in too funereal colours. Zola has done the thing in *L'Assommoir* till one is disgusted. More recently Mr. Stacey Aumonier has done it in *Three Bars Interval* till one is hurt. If this were the whole story, all any decent men could do would be to wish God-speed to the prohibitionists. If alcohol is at once the eagle that gnaws the liver of this human Prometheus, and the chain that binds him to the rock, let us by all means

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abolish alcohol to-morrow and set Prometheus free. But is it not a dishonest simplification of the facts to suggest that alcohol is the only, or even the leading, sorrow of Prometheus? We have seen Prometheus delivered from this particular eagle and this particular chain in Turkey and other Mahometan countries, and has it brought him any perfection of happiness? It certainly has not made the Turk a perfect man. It may be doubted if many Englishwomen would care to give up their beer-drinking English husbands for teetotal Turks. It is difficult, I know, to compare the lot of one race with another without bias, but I cannot help believing that a neutral visitor from Mars would give it as his opinion that, on an average, a woman in England of the breweries leads a richer and fuller and freer life than a woman in the watery wastes of Turkey. If this is so, it is no good pretending that the disuse of alcohol is itself a positive path to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Turkey is free—or comparatively free—from the miseries of alcoholism, but she has miseries of her own resulting from vices of her own. Nor does she dispense happiness to others with a more lavish hand than we of the West. It is credibly reported that an Armenian takes no more pleasure in having his throat cut by a teetotal Turk than an Irishman takes in being led off to gaol by a guard of beer-drinking English soldiers. Clearly, then, it behoves teetotallers to walk warily. The key to Heaven does not lie at the bottom of a ginger-beer bottle.

But we need not go as far as Turkey in order to discover some remarkable facts throwing light on the problem of alcohol. We find abundance of them in

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England itself. For one thing, we find that excessive drinking—drinking, I mean, to the point of incapacity and violence—is much less common among the educated than among the uneducated classes. For another thing, we find that the most desperate crimes due to drunkenness happen almost exclusively among the poor. Many English judges have dogmatically and sorrowfully announced from the Bench that the majority of criminal cases that come before them are the direct result of drink. Social reformers and clergymen applaud the judges, taking their word as gospel. But have the judges, in saying this, not simply followed the line of least resistance? Have they not pounced on the first explanation of crime that saves them from having to face the real explanation, which is that the leading cause of crime is not drink, but poverty? If Dives and Lazarus both get drunk, and Dives scarcely ever does anything to bring him before the magistrate, while Lazarus has to be dragged before the magistrate every Monday morning, one can hardly resist the conclusion either that Dives is specially favoured by the police or that drink has a different effect upon him from what it has on Lazarus. We may in this connection leave the favour of the police out of the question. The police may hush up many things, but they cannot as a rule hush up murders and crimes of violence. Now we find that, among gentlemen of means, murders and kindred crimes resulting from drink are practically unknown, while among the inhabitants of the slums crimes of the same sort are in comparison of frequent occurrence. One would imagine that, in the circumstances, a logical man would say: “Abolish the slums.” To abolish

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poverty, however, would mean the reconstruction of society. It would mean, ultimately, the equalisation of all citizens, so far as their rights to food and houses and holidays and education are concerned. It would mean, in other words, an end of the world we know. Alas, we are in love with the world we know. We do not wish it to come to an end. What can we do to save this beautiful, profitable world? What is there that we can throw to the wolves? Why, a keg of spirits! Out goes the whiskey on to the road—a most unsatisfactory diet for wild beasts—and off we gallop, feeling saved for the moment from the remorseless pursuit of the wolves of truth. What they want to eat up is our social system; we hope to stave them off with our public-house system instead. Were not the wise always lovers of compromise?

One part of the moral case against prohibition, then, is founded on the fact that prohibition is a means of shutting our eyes to the terrible facts of poverty and to the necessity for abolishing poverty altogether. Practically everyone who argues in favour of prohibition has working-men, and not Cabinet Ministers or employers or country gentlemen, in his mind. If everybody could hold their liquor like Cabinet Ministers and employers and country gentlemen, we know very well that nobody would think prohibition worth carrying. There are cases of alcoholism among the rich as among the poor; alcoholism is a vice like sexual excess, or cruelty, or meanness. We recognise that all these vices are loathsome and that, in certain circumstances, they may call for the interference of the law. But we do not universally prohibit love and children and money because a



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certain number of vicious creatures are sure to be lustful and cruel and mean. We know that we should not be making our fellow-creatures happier, but more miserable, if we did so. We can unquestionably make men virtuous by Acts of Parliament, but the Acts of Parliament that will make men virtuous and happy are those that give men a chance, not those that give men chains. We can perfectly easily have a sober world—not a sinless world, but a reasonably sober world—as soon as we make up our minds that every child must be born and brought up in a decent home and at a decent school, and, when it grows to manhood, allowed to live a varied, rich, industrious, leisurely life equal in opportunities to that of a Prime Minister or a Bishop. This is not Utopianism. It is the only honest way to bring to an end the dismal tragedies of drink. To do less is immoral. It is a disputable thing whether the abolition of drink would on the whole increase the happiness of human society. I have heard a Canadian teetotaler assert regretfully that the teetotal towns in Canada were “dead as mutton” as a result of prohibition. The evidence on such a matter, however, is sure to be conflicting. Who can doubt, on the other hand, that men would be happier if society were reconstructed on a juster model? Many people doubt the feasibility of this, but who is there who does not desire to get rid of the mortal miseries of the slums? If we were as experimental in our politics as in our chemistry, we should at least see if the thing could not be done. And, even apart from social reconstruction as a whole, we could go a long way towards the abolition of alcoholism by reconstructing the public-house. We could forbid the sale of bad



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whiskey and fresh whiskey and impure beer. We could nationalise the drink trade, and so destroy all those incitements to alcohol-poisoning which arise from the love of profit. It is a grave step for the State to interfere with the normal life of man, to abolish a custom which has the sanction of many of the great and the wise and the good, unless every other means of achieving social happiness has been found wanting. If one is a Socialist it does not follow that one is a State-worshipper. For the State to limit the citizen's freedom, not because it is the best thing to do, but because it is the easiest thing to do, is immoral tyranny, and is the wrong way to a better civilisation. We are told, indeed, that in America, the most potent arguments for prohibition are not moral at all, but are economic and political. The employers wish to increase the efficiency of the workers, and social reformers wish to get rid of the liquor interest in politics (especially as so many of the publicans are Germans !). Well, it is good to make men efficient, and it is good to cleanse politics. I should have thought, however, it could be done without narrowing the bounds of human freedom. I doubt if it is justifiable to do it at the price of human freedom.

## XIX

### *Bullies*

**T**HERE is much to be said in defence of bullying. It is human ; it affords great pleasure to the bully ; it takes place almost entirely at the expense of those who are too feeble to defend themselves. One cannot imagine a Julius Cæsar or a Napoleon being bullied. None of Plutarch's men would have endured it. To be bullied is the mark of the mediocre. In spite of this, popular sympathies swing round easily to the side of the bullied. One has only to witness the behaviour of a Saturday-night crowd on seeing a drunken ruffian being frog-marched to the police-station in order to realise how deep is the detestation of the ordinary man or woman for the use of undue force against a fellow-creature. The drunkard may have kicked, thumped, and bitten the police until he was white, blue, or rainbow-coloured in the face. All this is forgotten as soon as the police have wrenched his arms and legs into a position that leaves him at their mercy. He is immediately seen as a victim of tyrants. One could not be more indignant if he were a baby or a dumb animal. He is indeed a babe in the arms of the cruel law. His own cruelties are forgotten and forgiven

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now that he himself is playing the part of sufferer. A drunken ruffian, unarrested, may be an object of fury and loathing. The same drunken ruffian, arrested, may ten minutes later be an object of devotion, like a lost cause. If the police do not arrest him they are denounced for never being there when they are wanted. If they do arrest him, they are denounced still more bitterly as "Cossacks," "brutes," and anything else that turns up in the vocabulary of vituperation. The mob itself has no objection to playing the bully at times, as we see in the pogroms in Russia and in the lynchings in America. We have seen it in a lesser degree in England in attacks on suffragettes, aliens, and other representatives of unpopular causes. If the mob sees four policemen arresting one criminal, its love of fair play is roused and it would cry, if it were articulate—which a mob never is—"Too many after one." But a mob, a thousand strong, may itself pursue one man without feeling that the principle of fair play is in any way being violated. The mob is conscious only of its desire to inflict just punishment. It does not feel like a bully, but like the hand of God. It never pauses to reflect that the policeman may feel equally moral. He is convinced that the wretch whom he has in his grip deserves all he gets, and, as he would put it, "a damned sight more." Once let a man feel that he is an instrument of justice, and it is difficult to set a limit to the things he will feel justified in doing. Alva and Mr. Murdstone were both inspired by the moral fervour of policemen. They felt that they were wrestling with (in the phraseology of the old-fashioned nurse) "limbs of Satan." To believe that one is fighting Satan is to be

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lost. It is Satan's own favourite emotion. The Germans had it. The murderers of Jews had it. The murderers of negroes had it. The alien-baiters had it. And, if the truth must be told, one has often had it oneself. It is a disease, one of the chief symptoms of which is that one begins to apologise for all sorts of crimes committed on one's own side. One may not be a brute, but one acquiesces in brutality. One may not be a bully, but one acquiesces in bullying. One even becomes blind to all crimes except those that are committed on the other side. When this stage is reached one feels justified in doing almost anything.

There have been a good many instances of this spirit lately in various defences one has heard of bullying in the Guards, and of the flogging of women in tropical Africa. I have met several people who deny, in the first place, that either of these things exists, and who, in the second place, defend them by appealing to the evil character of many recruits and most African natives. They declare indignantly not only that the recruits and the African natives are not bullied, but that they would not understand any milder treatment. All bullying, if we consider deeply enough, is simply an attempt to make people understand. The inquisitors used to try to make their victims understand theology—one of the most difficult of sciences. Many ill-educated persons sank under the strain. Even the rack could not screw into their brains some of the nicer definitions of Thomas Aquinas. Judge Jeffreys was equally inefficient in making the theology of the schoolmen generally understood in England. He was given a free hand, and he certainly succeeded in making a great number of people

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feel nervous. He liked, as he said, to give them "a lick with the rough side of his tongue," and we know what havoc even a charwoman or a bus-conductor can work by that method. Imagine a judge—ultimately a Lord Chancellor—exercising the same gift on his political and denominational opponents, and you will realise how uncomfortable it would be to stand in the dock in such circumstances. And Jeffreys had other weapons for those who were at his mercy besides the rough side of his tongue: He also flogged, and hanged, and gave up his victims to be sold as slaves for the West Indies. He lived for the luxury of terrorism. He was the bad sort of drunkard, irascible, vindictive, looking about for someone to injure. King Charles said of him that he had "no learning, no sense, no manners, and more impudence than ten carted street-walkers," and there were repeated protests against his brutalities even in Parliament. But he thrust his way triumphantly upwards, mainly because an instrument of persecution was what the Crown ultimately wanted. Persecution is simply bullying on the grand scale. It is the logic of the worship of force. It has taken the human race thousands of years to find out not so much that force is no remedy as that it is a desperate remedy; and even now the strong man (or the strong nation) is tempted to believe that his strength is the medicine the world needs. The philosophic have come to see, however, that, while force can secure many things, it cannot secure lasting stability. Possibly, nothing can. Napoleon and the Prussians both dreamed of bullying the world into permanent peace. They justified their terrorism by their dream of a world subject to their grandiose ideals.

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They did not realise that there was any alternative method of making the planet a place fit for heroes to live in. It is probable that Alva shared this incapacity for seeing alternatives. It is possible that even Jeffreys did so. A little more force, a little more persecution, a little more bullying, always seems a plausible cure for a somewhat stiff-necked humanity. Who does not feel his heart leap at the thought of being able to give his opponents twenty years of resolute government? One could work miracles in twenty years. One could break the will of the wicked. The Puritan that exists in every breast responds to the suggestion. Quite a number of people would rejoice to act as *locum tenens* for the Ruler of the Universe, even for twenty minutes. They feel that the Almighty is not sufficiently drastic with His thunderbolts. He acts as if He did not realise the Holy War. His habit of letting the sun shine on the just and the unjust does not appeal to men of spirit. Many a good man would be glad to teach Him how to play the bully from the great white Throne, and so to revolutionise the world in a few weeks. Such is the human passion for perfection. Many men have become bullies for Christ's sake.

It is amusing to read some of the defences of bullying in the Guards that have been appearing in the Press as a result of the charges made in Mr. Stephen Graham's book. An ex-sergeant in the Welsh Guards, writing to the *Star*, defends the "jolly rough time" the recruits were given by counter-accusing them of the most sinister vices. "Overstaying leave," he writes, "refusing to obey orders, taking no pride in their appearance, never cleaning their equipment decently—these were just a



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few of the pleasing ways of these pig-headed recruits." A provost-sergeant, nicknamed "Black Jack," has also published a defence of his drastic treatment of certain recruits on the ground that they deserved all they got. "Black Jack," he declares, "was respected by all honest soldiers who came in contact with him, but he was the terror of thieves." Another soldier writes: "As recruits were trained for five different regiments of Guards at Caterham, and the competition therefore between the various drill instructors was very keen, perhaps at times the men were treated a 'little harshly for the good of the regiment.' " All these defences seem to me to be beside the point. The question is not whether the recruits were naughty enough to try the temper of a saint, but whether non-commissioned officers on the whole or in any great numbers overstepped the limits of brutality while instilling virtue into them. The evidence on the matter is almost hopelessly conflicting. Each witness speaks from his personal experience, and, as every sort of human being was roped into the Army during the war, it is only to be expected that the bullies had a show as well as the Sunday-school teachers. Many soldiers have written to the Press, giving examples of the cruelty of the persecuting type of non-commissioned officer. One declares that in Chelsea barracks he witnessed "incredible devilries." He saw, for instance, "a man with three wound stripes kicked in the stomach and struck over the head by an N.C.O." Most of the accusations refer to blows, foul language, and blackmail, and remind one of the sort of novel one used to read about life in the German Army. On the whole, the picture is what anyone with a knowledge of



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human nature would have expected. The non-commissioned officer is neither a stylist nor a saint, and his work of converting free men into obedient soldiers (which has to be done largely by process of shouting) does not make for the refinement of human relations. If a professor of Greek had to shout at his students as a drill-sergeant has to shout at his men, even he might occasionally find himself lost in a wild whirl of blasphemies. To shout very loud for a long time sends the blood to the head, and, when the veins of the head are sufficiently distended, the meekest man becomes a very pirate of bloodthirstiness. If one has to shout very loud at a stupid man, one may forgive him seventy times seven, but at last the blasphemies pour out and the heart is satisfied. I have no doubt a good fifty per cent of the bad language of drill-sergeants may be put down to the necessity they are under of raising their voices. As a matter of fact, the average man, unless he has religious scruples, is not greatly disturbed by being sworn at. Blasphemy salted with good humour would never set him writing to the papers to protest. What he resents is the code that allows a great deal of brutality to pass unchecked "for the good of the regiment." He is horrified not by blood-curdling oaths but by the prospect of coming under the power of someone dressed in a little brief authority and determined to "let you know it." Very few men are fit to be trusted with any great amount of authority over their fellows. It is well that all rulers, judges, magistrates and policemen should discharge their functions under the constant threat of criticism. Set a man above criticism and give him unlimited control over his fellows, and in at

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least five cases out of ten he will develop tyrannous habits. Bullying is merely petty tyranny. It is a boastful exhibition of one's powers. To be a bully is to feel like an emperor in a tiny sphere. It is an expression of energy—often the only expression of great energy of which a coward is capable. Charles Lamb said justly that the bully is not always a coward. But it is none the less true that the coward is frequently a bully. It is the only safe way of feeling like a lion. The fact that it is so safe, indeed, is the decent man's chief objection to bullying. It is not called bullying if the other man is one's equal and has the right to hit back. Hence it is not to be reckoned among the heroic vices. In spite of the great pleasure it gives to those who practise it, one is glad to see it being gradually discredited. But it is folly to pretend that it has already disappeared from a world in which the ordinary man has not even a chance of acquiring the habits of a gentleman. A world of inequalities is almost bound to be a world of bullies. Bullying is merely the ego shouting "It's me" and letting out a kick in the general scrimmage.

*Massacre as a Weapon of the Strong*

IT is a rather remarkable fact that during the war English soldiers in Gallipoli were giving the Turk a certificate as a soldier and a gentleman, while English statesmen and journalists at home were painting him as a devil. Common sense seems to say that both pictures cannot be true. And yet the evidence makes it clear enough that both pictures, as a matter of fact, are true. There is nothing contradictory of human nature as we know it in the suggestion that a man may be a gentleman in dealing with those whom he regards as his equals, and a devil in dealing with those whom he regards as his inferiors. The same man may be a gentleman in Gallipoli and a devil in Armenia. Those who indulge in the mania of massacre are not therefore necessarily without charm and courage and courtesy. Almost all Western travellers who have shared the hospitality of the Turks have liked them : some people have even defended the Armenian massacres as though massacres perpetrated by such charming people were justified without further argument. Similarly, I have heard men who have travelled in Russia putting up a case for pogroms. They conclude that because the

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Russians, including Russian officials, are exceedingly pleasant people to meet, there must be a good reason even for those outbursts of multiple homicide. As a matter of fact, the desire to massacre one's enemies is not a vice confined to hooved and horned races. I wish it were. Then the rest of the world could police them into quietness. Massacre is a vice of which almost any nation is capable as soon as it regards its enemies not as human beings, but merely as a hostile principle. It is as easy to find an excuse for a massacre as it is to find an excuse for a war. "Give me the money to make war," said Frederick the Great, "and I will buy a pretext for half-a-crown." The pretext for a massacre may be had for as little. The real reason in most cases is mere irritation against a people who are making themselves a nuisance. When Cleon was urging upon the Athenians the massacre of the adult male population of Mitylene, he declared he could have forgiven the people of Mitylene if they had been rebels, but what he hated in them was that they were independent and yet had wantonly taken sides with the enemies of Athens. If they had been rebels, no doubt, he would have turned his excuse the other way round. The excuse is nothing more creditable in the history of Periclean Athens than the way in which the Athenians, having ordered the massacre of Mitylene, changed their minds. Even so, however, the fact that a people endowed with so many of the most attractive virtues contemplated such a crime sheds a horrible light on the possibilities of even the finer sort of human nature.

But history is full of the crimes of men who were by no means devil-worshippers. We know how the

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virtuous Pliny put Christians to death and tortured the unhappy deaconesses when he was legate in Bithynia, simply because he regarded them as contumacious and obstinate. The record of Marcus Aurelius as a persecutor of the Christians comes as a shock to many who have supped on virtue in his pages. Some historian might very well write a book on the crimes of good men. If someone were to write a history of massacre, I wonder whether more space would be required for the crimes of good men or of bad. We may be sure that many virtuous contemporaries approved of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, when men, women, and children to the number of twenty thousand, according to some, and one hundred thousand according to others, were put to death, Pope Gregory XIII ordering a *Te Deum* and other rejoicings to celebrate so signal a service to Jesus Christ. Similarly, we may be sure that many of the Elizabethan English who applauded the wholesale massacre of the Irish were, as regards their own country, honest and kindly gentlemen. Froude, who is by no means pro-Irish in his reading of history, observes in regard to these massacres :

The English nation was shuddering over the atrocities of the Duke of Alva. The children in the nurseries were being inflamed to patriotic rage and madness by tales of Spanish tyranny. Yet Alva's bloody sword never touched the young, the defenceless, or those whose sex even dogs can recognise and respect.

*Nor was Gilbert a bad man.* As times went, he passed for a brave and chivalrous gentleman. . . . He regarded himself as dealing rather with savage

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beasts than with human beings, and when he tracked them to their dens he strangled their cubs and rooted out the entire broods.

In justice to the English soldiers . . . it must be said that it was no fault of theirs if any Irish child of that generation was allowed to live to manhood.

The whole secret of the will to massacre—at least, a great part of it—is concealed in that sentence in which Gilbert is described as regarding his enemies as savage beasts rather than human beings.

Clearly, a people either exasperated by opposition or maddened by oppression can easily persuade itself of the beastliness of its enemies. The Turk who hates a Christian and the Christian who hates a Turk are each capable of regarding the other as vermin to be exterminated. Montenegrin poets have sung, for instance, in celebration of the Montenegrin Vespers of Christmas Eve, 1703, when Danilo I ordered the massacre of every Turk in the country :

Christmas Eve was chosen as the night of the massacre, in memory of the victims who fell at Kossovo. The fatal evening arrived ; the brothers Martinovic lighted their holy tapers, prayed with fervour to the new-born God, drank each a cup of wine to the glory of Christ, and, seizing their consecrated clubs, rushed off through the darkness. Wherever a Turk was to be found, the five avengers appeared : all who refused baptism were massacred without pity.

Many average human beings, who have never massacred anything above flies and beetles, have a way of defending massacres perpetrated by what they regard



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as their own side, and denouncing as devilish those which are perpetrated by their enemies. Too many of the ignorant sort of Protestants and Catholics are given to this dishonest reading of history. They regard massacre as a crime only if it is a massacre of people like themselves. Cynics must have smiled during the war to read various articles belittling the Bulgarian atrocities of the 'seventies. This was merely because Bulgaria had come into the war against the Allies. It is an extraordinary thing that a man of any intelligence whatever should apparently believe that the sin of Bulgaria in 1915 blotted out from the pages of history sins committed against Bulgaria in 1876. During the month of May in that year, according to the British Commissioner who inquired into the matter, about twelve thousand Christians were massacred by the Turks. In the village of Batak, where five thousand out of a population of seven thousand were put to death, many of the Christians crowded into the church, whereupon the Turks tore off the roof and burned them to death by throwing among them flaring rags soaked in petroleum and blazing timber. And that is but a type of other Turkish massacres. Yet nearly everyone likes the Turks who have permitted such things. They appear to be not a nation of Crippens, but a nation of good hosts. What, then, is the secret of their double nature? Partly, it is that they have regarded their enemy as vermin, and partly it is that they have acted on the supposition that an empire can only exist on a basis of terrorism. Of the other famous massacres of history many have taken place after the storming of cities, and are due to the sudden release of the fury and fierceness of the siege.



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Of this kind was that foul massacre of Cremona, when the Vitellians were vanquished ; and the sack of Rome in 1527 by the Constable of Bourbon and his army of Germans, Spaniards, and Italians was the occasion of similar horrors of fury and drunkenness. In the latter, we are told, women had their ears and hands cut off for the sake of their jewels, and citizens were murdered for sport. In similar circumstances the massacre of Ismail took place in 1790, when Suvaroff ordered six thousand women to be put to death, as well as the Turkish garrison of thirty thousand. Compared to this the sacking of Badajos was a mild affair, but the drunken horrors of that orgy of rape, loot, and murder have left a black story in history. It was after the victory of Badajos that Wellington burst into tears. Of all the great historical massacres in captured cities, none remains more tragically in the memory than that of Limoges in 1370, when chivalry did not stay the hand of the victorious Black Prince. The story is best known in the pages of Froissart :

Then the prince, the Duke of Lancaster, the Earl of Cambridge, the Earl of Pembroke, and all the other with their companies entered into the city, and all other footmen, ready apparelled to do evil, and to pill and rob the city, and to slay men, women, and children, for so it was commanded them to do. It was great pity to see the men, women, and children that kneeled down on their knees before the prince for mercy ; but he was so inflamed with ire, that he took no heed to them, so that none was heard but all put to death that were met withal, and such as were nothing culpable. There was no pity taken of the poor people, who wrought never no manner of

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treason. . . . There was not so hard a heart within the city of Limoges, and if he had any remembrance of God, but that wept piteously for the great mischief that they saw before their eyes ; for more than three thousand men, women, and children were slain and beheaded that day—God have mercy on their souls, for I trow they were martyrs !

Before the recent war broke out, one had a faint hope that all this was for the most part ancient history—at least as far as Western Europe was concerned. Then came Louvain and Aerschot, and we realised that a nation of civilised men was still capable of re-enacting in great measure the horrors of the sack of Cremona and the sack of Rome. The will to massacre was abroad in the world again, and the twentieth century was linked in public crime to the Renaissance and the Middle Ages. It is all the result of hatred let loose, of the folly of arrogance which regards the hostile earth as inhabited by beasts. The German cannot plead in excuse that Providence gave him horns and a tail or that, like Caligula, he is mad. He is merely an example of an average educated human being, capable of good and evil, who bowed down to massacre as to a god, and indulged in blood-lust as in heathen rites. Possibly, many Germans thought that, because they read Goethe and are kind to their children, they were justified in massacring “ contumacious ” enemies (as Pliny would have called them) at will. One of the tragedies of the war was that so many of the better sort of Germans defended their country’s crimes.

Then since the war there was Amritsar. . . . Well, what’s the good of talking ?

*The World as One Place*

WHEN a man tells you that it is impossible to be a citizen of the world, and that all talk of such a thing is mere cant, he usually wears a hard-headed expression. His expression is justified if he means that an average Englishman could never feel at home in the company of an African Bushman in the same way as he feels at home among people who know how to flatter him in his own language. The Englishman may get to like Bushmen if he lives among them, but even so he will not like them to the point of wishing to see his sisters marrying them. And one does not need to go as far abroad as the Bushmen in order to discover evidence of the deep division that exists between race and race. Few people regard even Europe as one place when it comes to the choice of a friend or a wife. When a man marries a woman of another race, his friends are nervous if he is not. George Wyndham once said that the aristocracy of Europe were all one family, and, in the circles of royalty and aristocracy, the prejudice against foreigners as foreigners is, except during war, milder than in the middle classes. If middle-class prejudices, however, disprove the unity of the world, and the unity of Europe, they must also be held to disprove

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the unity of the English or any other nation. For, just as there are divisions between race and race and between nation and nation, so there are internal divisions between creed and creed and between class and class. The Evangelical Protestant mother is in despair if her daughter marries a Catholic; the Baptist is doubtful about the Methodist, and both look down on the Plymouth Brother. The religious man and the atheist regard each other with horror, though nowadays, one fancies, the religious man is frequently the more tolerant of the two. I have heard a charming atheist declare that the ultimate division is between people who believe in God and people who don't : belief in God, it appears, is the only unforgivable *faux pas*. And, if persons of different creed regard each other in this fashion, persons of different social status are as hostile "under their skins." Mr. Kipling once portrayed a united England in which cook's son and duke's son got cheek by jowl in the same line of verse ; but we have not yet seen even the first foreshadowings of an England in which a duchess can marry a potman without causing something of a scandal or in which Lord Chancellors choose their friends from among greengrocers. Thus every nation may be said to be rent with divisions. Creed is set against creed, class against class, town against country, citizen against citizen. One could enumerate and exaggerate divisions of this kind in such a way as to make it appear that England writhes in a fiery sea of Strindbergian hatreds and is a prey to worse than Bolshevik anarchy. One could depict Liverpool speaking ill of Manchester, the north expressing a raucous contempt for the south, Berkshire inventing insulting

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things to say to Buckinghamshire, and Kensington proper despising West Kensington. A writer of comic genius once imagined what it would be like if the London boroughs made war on one another, and, in a sense, a thousand subdued wars of the kind are in progress in England every day. One ought, perhaps, to say thirty million wars, for, wherever there is a human being, there is a war. There is not a village in the country, there is hardly a house, where there is not a constant struggle going on, if it is only for a clerkship in a gas-company or between a nurse and a child.

In spite of all this, however, one knows that the unity of England is a real thing, and that the man who denied it would be a mere maker of paradoxes. The Englishman feels within him the sense of one place called England, with one body of traditions, with one great inheritance of political and moral ideas and literature, with even a prevailing type of character and features in the inhabitants. To an ordinary Englishman, the unity of England seems one of the fixed and permanent things in Nature, like the seven stars in the Plough. He seldom casts his mind back to those woad-addicted creatures who would have found it more difficult to grasp the idea of the unity of England than the modern man finds it to grasp the idea of the unity of the world. The unity of the tribe, the unity of the city, or the unity of the province, has in all cases preceded and, no doubt, fought against the unity of the nation. Every unit, however small—whether a feudal clan or a city—is sensitive as regards the most cautious inroads made into its independence. The nations that we nowadays know as

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England, France, Italy, Bohemia, Ireland, all had to pass through stage after stage of civil war before they became predominantly the *patria* of their inhabitants. It is not a hundred years since it was possible for a great, though abominable, statesman to dismiss Italy as "a geographical expression," and yet the unity of Italy had been preparing ever since the pre-Christian days when the city of Rome began to admit the alien tribes at her doors into the Roman citizenship. True, Rome extended her citizenship far beyond the coast-line of Italy, and in that way may have prophesied even a wider unity than the unity of a nation. But the time for this is not yet. The most unbreakable unity the world knows at the present moment is the unity of nationality. Even the unity of the strongest possible empire is less binding. As Mr. Chesterton has put it, an empire is only a community, while a nation is a communion. This communion, however, is not a thing suddenly created by an act of God, but has slowly become a reality after long ages of compromise, reluctance, and civil war. A sense of common interests, common traditions, common liberties, which once clustered round the city or clan, has now become attached to the larger unit. The great empires of the past fell because they were ultimately neither communities nor communions. "The Persian Empire," as Mr. Zimmern says, "was more imposing than the Republics of Greece; Assyria and Babylon than the little tribal divisions of Palestine; the Spanish Empire than the cities of the Netherlands." But Athens and Judæa were, like modern nations, communions. In so far as they were so, they enabled men to live intenser and larger lives. Man cannot live without communion,



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and his capacity for a larger communion is one of the few respects in which we can feel almost certain that he has progressed since the days of the Athenians. It is, I admit, not yet proved that he can advance beyond the communion of nationality to a communion of Europe or a communion of the world. I am myself sceptical as to the coming of a communion of the world which will obliterate and supplant the communion of the nation. I do not even believe that, at the present stage of civilisation, it is desirable. If there is to be a communion of the world, it must supplement, rather than supplant, the communion of the nations. In such a condition of affairs, the true citizens of the world would be the individual nations, not the individual men and women. The ideal nation would be public-spirited and law-abiding as regards the world at large just as the ideal man is public-spirited and law-abiding as regards his own nation. The League of Nations is well named, because it is a league of communions already in existence, not a league of human beings free from what the cosmopolitan regards as narrow national loyalties.

At the same time, the unity of the world, like the unity of a nation, if it can be created at all, can only be created in the imagination of individual men and women. The world will become one place as soon as a sufficient number of men and women think it so. Already it is an astronomical unit, reeling with the deliberate march of a tipsy man round the sun. The geologist, too, may say with Tom Paine: "The world is my country." The geographer tells the very school-children that it is as definitely a recognisable thing as an orange that you



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might take up in your hand. And the religions, as Mr. Wells points out in the first part of *The Outline of History*, which may well introduce a new form into literature, usually begin with "some sort of cosmogony and world history as a basis." The creation of the world, when we read about it, seems an even more impressive event than the creation of one's own country. But as soon as it is created we seem to lose all further interest in it, and confine our attention to one small patch or series of small patches on its surface. This concentration is in many respects a good thing, but it is a good thing only if we do not fall victims to the delusion that nothing beyond the patch on which we concentrate exists. We must not deny the world even if we have ordinarily to ignore the greater part of it. After all, one has ordinarily to ignore the greater part of one's own country, as one earns one's living or eats one's meals. But the existence of one's country is a fact ever present in one's imagination and repeatedly exercises an influence on one's opinions and behaviour. The existence of the world is not as yet a fact of this kind. A sense of the existence of the world is rare even among statesmen. The world may be said to exist as a unit for purposes of exploitation, but that is all. We have no public spirit about the planet. Just, however, as men in previous ages have had to choose between the communion of the nation and the disunion of warring classes, so the nations must now choose between the communion of the world and the disunion of warring peoples. War has reached a point where it embraces the world, even if our thoughts do not. And the peace that wise men now long for is not a mere peace among rival empires but a peace of the

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world. "There can," as Mr. Wells writes, "be no peace now . . . but a common peace in all the world ; no prosperity but a general prosperity." And he adds, as an excuse for his own heroic and remarkable enterprise in history : " But there can be no common peace and prosperity without common historical ideas." Hence his attempt to inculcate into us " a sense of history as the common adventure of all mankind." His history will thus be no mere digest of the histories of the component nations and empires. It will be an attempt to follow the career of man as the inhabitant of this run-away globe. To a man of speculative temper, accustomed to let his mind wander from star to star through the crooked reaches of the universe, it must seem natural to take a patriotic interest in this temperate little planet, this demi-Eden, so comfortable, at so exactly the right distance from the sun, the planet that produced Socrates and Shakespeare and us. It seems sentimentally like home when we contrast it with the blank and barbarous seas of space studded with dead worlds. The more we know of it, the more affectionate we feel about it. But most of us know hardly anything ; and we are appalled as we think of the vast libraries of the historians and men of science whom we have no time to read. More and more history, it is probable, will be written in the future in the spirit in which Mr. Wells is writing his new book. It is an attempt to master twenty sciences and a hundred histories, and to give them all together the unity of a tale. There will still be room for those other tales in which the hero is not man as an abstraction but man in the concrete—Pericles and Lincoln and Garibaldi. The human imagination needs the help both

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of the philosopher and of the artist ; and the philosopher and the artist need one another. Mr. Wells's new work, it may well be, will become a revolutionary contribution to popular history. If it does, it will also help to revolutionise popular politics more than all the diatribes that could be written against secret diplomacy in a hundred years.

*The Wrongs of Birds*

IT is difficult to say on what the modern feeling that birds ought to be protected from rapacious man is based. It is clearly not based on regard for the sanctity of life. Few of the advocates of the birds are abstainers from chicken and partridge. Even the vegetarians among them have so little regard for the sanctity of life that they openly boast of the millions of insects that the birds annually slaughter. In the last resort, it is doubtful if the average man will respect the life of any creature which he looks on as a danger to his health or wealth. He would exterminate horses, dogs, flamingos, or butterflies if he got it into his head that the continuance of any of them threatened his own existence. He may have lost the belief that he is the centre of all the solar systems and that all the animals and all the stars were created merely with a view to his interests. But he still acts as if this were so. He would, without scruple, extinguish the stars (supposing he could get at them) if they blighted his corn and potatoes. There was a conscientious objector who, when driven into a corner, confessed to a tribunal that so great a horror had he of taking life that, if he were working on a farm, he could not

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conscientiously spray the potato crop for fear of killing the insects or germs, or whatever one calls them, that cause disease. The average man regards feelings of this kind as unhealthy. He sees that you have only to go a step further to find yourself shuddering over the torture endured by the grass while the cattle munch it in their remorseless jaws. Clearly, all we animals live by the destruction of life, whether we are cannibals or vegetarians. Every bird is a butcher-bird. It will slay a lettuce, if not a worm.

On the other hand, as civilisation advances, we do undoubtedly shrink more and more from unnecessary killing. At an early stage we cease to kill our own kind either for the sake of a dainty dish or for sport. If we kill a man our motives are no longer luxurious, but strictly utilitarian. Our consciences would wound us if we could not show that we gained something by doing it. Nor is it enough that we should gain as individuals. Killing is murder when the gain is not public as well as private. And, just as there is a tendency to keep the killing of men within ever narrower bounds, so there is an increasing tendency to restrict the killing of animals to necessary killing. Luxury killing is no longer regarded as the natural right of every boy and man. Outside a few traditional sports the killer has now to "show cause" for his action. Civilised people, however much they wish to get rid of flies, are distressed if they see their children killing flies for fun. However much they are in favour of the diminution of house-sparrows, they do not encourage their nephews to slaughter them with catapults. If we "swat that fly," we do it, not joyfully as sportsmen, but in the sober

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spirit of work. Our ancestors did things to badgers, cats, owls, gannets, and gulls, all in the way of sport, which would nowadays shock a hanging judge. It used to be a favourite sport among fishermen to put a sprat or some small fish on a floating board in order to tempt gannets to dive for it. The gannet would dive at the board as though it were the sea, and the force of the dive would break its neck. It is difficult to think of many people among one's acquaintances in these days who would be even mildly amused by such practices. Small boys in Cornwall used to have a still more unpleasant way of killing seagulls. Baiting hooks with a morsel of fish, they would leave these lying about the sands for gulls to swallow. As soon as the gull was hooked they would drag it towards them and wring its neck. This sport of killing for its own sake has now few defenders. We regard a boy who would be deliberately cruel to a seagull as we would a boy who blew up a frog through a straw inserted into its body. Many boys, whom it would be absurd to look on as criminals, will do these things if it is the habit of their friends to do them. There is a vein of cruelty in most children, if it is encouraged by circumstances. The reason why the modern boy does not do many things that boys used to do is simply that the code has changed. To some extent, no doubt, the newer sort of education has interested him in birds and beasts as the "useful knowledge" taught in the old-fashioned schools failed to do. There are probably at least fifty schoolmasters with a taste for natural history for every one that could be discovered two generations ago. Add to this the fact that we are interested nowadays in the study of the living creature where our



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ancestors were content with the stuffed specimen. Mr. W. H. Hudson's contemptuous dislike of the stuffed birds of the museums is symptomatic of the change that has come over the public taste. Educationally, the preference for the study of the living creature rather than the corpse is, it is reasonable to think, a great improvement. One learns exceedingly little about either a bird or a butterfly if one only knows its dead body in a glass case.

In recent months we have seen the old controversy reopened as to the advantage of killing birds, not for the amusement of boys, but for the decoration of women. Ornithologists, sportsmen, and agriculturists have united with humanitarians, poets, and members of General Page Croft's party, in protesting against a feather trade which cannot apparently be carried on without seriously risking the extermination of various species of birds which are of interest to man on account not only of their beauty but of their value as assistants in preserving the food supply. On the whole, however, the protesters seem to regard the utilitarian argument as being merely of secondary importance. The men of science and the æsthetes are disturbed mainly by the prospect that, if something is not done, some of the most beautiful and interesting species of birds will entirely disappear. The rest are for the most part moved by the feeling that the end (which is the luxury of woman's dress) does not justify the cruel means by which it is achieved. It is just twenty-one years since the use of osprey plumage as a decoration in the British Army was abolished on these grounds by Lord Wolseley. Until that time, these plumes were worn by officers in



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the Horse Artillery, the Hussars, the King's Royal Rifles, and the Rifle Brigade. On its becoming generally known that to obtain them involved a great deal of cruelty, an order was issued that the plumes of the ostrich should henceforth be used instead. Women, however, are apparently less impressionable than soldiers, for the abandonment of osprey plumes in the Army was not followed by a similar step among fashionable ladies. Yet the evidence of the cruelty necessary in the collection of osprey plumes is so overwhelming as to make one doubt whether the prettiest feather is quite worth it. The plumage of the egret, as is well known, only attains its perfect beauty at the breeding season. At this time the bird is not only at its loveliest but at its tamest, as it is absorbed in the rearing of its young. Hence, it is always killed at a season when its death involves leaving the young birds in the nest to die of starvation. We get a vivid description of the desolation wrought on these occasions in the confession of an old plume-hunter who carried on the trade in Venezuela. "The natives of the country," he declared, "who do virtually all the hunting for feathers, are of a most cruel and brutal nature. I have seen them frequently pull the plumes from wounded birds, leaving the crippled birds to die of starvation, unable to respond to the cries of their young in the nests above which were calling for food. I have known these people to tie and prop up wounded egrets on the marsh, where they would attract the attention of other birds flying by. These decoys they keep in position until they die of their wounds, or from the attacks of insects. I have seen the terrible red ants of that country actually eating out the eyes of these

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wounded, helpless birds, that were tied up by the plume-hunters." One need not be a sentimentalist to be disgusted by such a description as this. In England, sportsmen recognise two races of men—the "thorough sportsman" and the other sort. The "thorough sportsman" is one who, having wounded a bird, will insist on looking for it till he has found it in order not to leave it to die slowly in its pain. He is neither a humanitarian on the one hand, nor callous on the other. He will take life, but he will not inflict careless pain in doing so. The story of the plumage trade, unfortunately, is crowded with instances of the most monstrous cruelty. We are told of albatross-hunters who cut the wings off living birds and leave them to die of hæmorrhage. On Laysen Island, in the South Pacific, an official investigator on behalf of the United States Government came on evidence of the loathsome cruelties of these plumage-hunters. In a dry cistern he found "the living birds were kept by hundreds to starve slowly to death. In this way the fatty tissue lying next to the skin was used up and the skin was left quite free from grease, so that it required little or no cleaning during preparation. Many other revolting sights, such as the remains of young birds that had been left to starve, were to be seen." And the same sort of story comes from all parts of the world where it pays to go plume-hunting. In the result, there is a serious danger that many species of beautiful and useful birds may become as extinct as the dodo. The egret was disappearing from Florida (where a single heronry, it was estimated, a few years ago contained three million birds) when the United States passed a plumage law such as is now being

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agitated for in England. The bird of paradise is in danger of disappearing from many tropical countries. The kingfisher is becoming an ever rarer bird, and it is little wonder, seeing that in a single year the skins of 272,000 kingfishers were sold in the London feather market at threepence-halfpenny each. And yet we have the unanimous witness of the scientific agriculturists that but for the birds the insects would become a plague so disastrous that neither crops nor cattle would be safe and that the trees would be stripped bare of their leaves. In Salt Lake City, as Mr. James Buckland tells us in his pamphlet, *The Plumage Bill: What it Means*, the inhabitants have set up a public monument to the seagulls that came and delivered them from a plague of black crickets which in two successive years came and devoured their wheat-crop. The bird is similarly the enemy of the locust and of the mosquito that carries so many deadly diseases in the tropics.

Thus it will be seen that the plumage question is no mere fad of the humanitarians, but is related to other great questions affecting the health and the food supply of man. Moralists differ as to the extent of man's rights over the brute creation. The Buddhist would spare all life. The average Englishman would shrink from eating a robin. He has even doubts about eating larks in a pie, such as that for which Meredith wrote out the recipe. But no moralist of any school has ever advocated indifference to cruelty. And no man of any common sense has ever professed indifference to the health and food supply of the human race. The question of ostrich plumes is on a different footing from the general plumage question, as the trade in ostrich feathers, it is said,

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involves no ill either to bird or man. But, if it can be shown (as I think it can) that the traffic in birds' feathers not only involves gross cruelty but endangers what is called the economy of Nature, then both the trading in and the wearing of these dearly-bought plumes should surely be prohibited by law. The *Times*, the Royal Family, and great authorities on the tropics such as Sir Harry Johnston, have hitherto been as ineffective as the humanitarians in their contest with the small but determined feather trade in the East End of London. The present agitation, however, coming as it does at a time when the world's food supply is less secure than it has been within living memory, may well result in an end being put once and for all to a useless form of destructive savagery.

## XXIII

### *Patriotism for Infants*

**P**ERHAPS there is no more difficult problem in education than how to teach patriotism to boys and girls. It is open to doubt even whether it can be taught. Patriotism is not a ready-made subject like Latin grammar or algebra. It is not an exact science about which there is no disputing outside lunatic asylums. There are about as many varieties of patriotism as of religion. It shades off gradually from the patriotism of the bully at the one end of the scale to the patriotism of the saint at the other—I mean the extreme kind of saint who would willingly see himself and his country crucified if he thought this was necessary to the salvation of the world. Obviously, here are two denominations of patriotism which have as little in common with one another as Catholics and Plymouth Brethren. Each of us, no doubt, will contend that there is only one true church of patriotism as of religion, and that he himself belongs to it. “Orthodoxy is my doxy,” as Byron put it: “heterodoxy is the other fellow’s doxy.” But no impartial investigator from another planet would accept this view of the matter without more corroboration than the passion with which it is

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uttered. He would study with an equal eye every hideous and beautiful variety of patriotism from Demosthenes to Mr. Bottomley, from Moses to Tom Paine and Mr. G. K. Chesterton and the *Evening News*. He would not need to go back further than the Boer War to discover examples of patriotism in several of its manifestations. He would find that in the course of that war two equally ardent patriots, Mr. Kipling and Mr. Chesterton, took diametrically opposite sides. The one hoped that England would win, the other hoped that the Boers would win. For Mr. Chesterton was not content to accept the conventional Radical view that, while the war ought never to have been begun, it was better, when once it was begun, that England should have the victory. As he has explained in a recent preface, he and Mr. Belloc were Pro-Boers in a sense in which the ordinary Pro-Boers, as the Radicals were called, were not. "We were," as he says, "much more insistent that the Boers were right in fighting than that the English were wrong in fighting." At the time, this seemed to many people the patriotism of a traitor. And, looking backward, many people probably still think it so. I am not concerned at the present moment with the question whether the Chestertonian kind of patriotism or the Kipling sort is nearer the ideal. All I wish to suggest is that a visitor from Mars, who studied the careers and writings of Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Kipling, would be much less likely to conclude that one of them was a patriot and the other a traitor, than that both of them were patriots, but of different kinds. He would note that Mr. Chesterton is a patriot who likes to think he belongs to a little country, and that Mr. Kipling is a

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patriot who likes to think he belongs to a big country. He would see that Mr. Chesterton loves England as riotously as Mr. Kipling loves the British Empire. In other words, one of them has the patriotism of the Nationalist, the other the patriotism of the Imperialist. Mr. Chesterton's patriotic verse would find a response in any of the little nations : Mr. Kipling's in any of the great Powers.

One of the questions which have for some time past been engaging the thoughts of political writers is whether the patriotism of the Nationalist and the patriotism of the Imperialist can ultimately be reconciled. The British Empire, it is claimed, has gone a great way further towards such a reconciliation than did the German, though it would be hypocrisy to pretend that the matter has yet been finally settled in any country. Professor Stanley Lane-Poole has formulated the pro-British view in the assertion that the English ideal of Imperialism is a State composed of nations, while the German ideal is a nation composed of States. That, however, is only a rough statement, and, while it would be enthusiastically approved in Canada and Australia, it would be regarded as wildly rose-coloured in Ireland, India, Egypt, and by many people in South Africa. But it is not my purpose to discuss the Nationalist-Imperialist formula. I am interested in it just now only in so far as it is symptomatic of a tendency not to force one's patriotism upon other people but to take other people's patriotism as an accepted and admirable fact, and so to prepare the world not for a conflict, but for a community, of patriotisms.

The immediate occasion of this brief inquiry into the



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nature of patriotism is the issue of a pamphlet by the Welsh Department of the Board of Education, containing "suggestions to local education authorities and teachers in Wales regarding the teaching of patriotism." This threepenny pamphlet, entitled *Patriotism*, has been published in connection with the observance of the national anniversary of St. David's Day ; and it seems to me that, if patriotism is to be directly taught at all, the suggestions put forward are unusually sane and free from vulgar offence. There is little to be said for the sort of lesson in patriotism which involves the salutation of flags and the howling of bulldog songs by children. It may, for all one knows, be possible to drill harmless infants into bumptious little patriots along these lines. It is quite as likely, on the other hand, that, taught in this way, patriotism may end in boring children as insufferably as school poetry. This, it may be objected, might be used as an argument against teaching poetry, or, indeed, any other pleasant subject. But it is really only an argument against teaching poetry or any other pleasant subject in such a way as will make it either hated or ridiculous. Mr. Kipling's patriotism is not open to suspicion even in the most flag-wagging circles, but he has given in one of the chapters of *Stalky and Co.* a perfect derisive satire of the kind of patriot who attempts to impress an assembly of schoolboys with flags and mouthings. These things belong to the bombast of patriotism, not to its realities. The school-boy learns more of the realities of patriotism from the story of Curtius leaping into the gulf than from a thousand orations made up out of the rags and tags of leading articles. He is instinctively a patriot. Every-

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thing, except the professors of patriotism, conspires to make him so. He begins with the patriotism of the school. His school-patriotism, indeed, is more often in need of curbing than otherwise. He learns to think of the inhabitants of rival schools with contempt and dislike. He invents nicknames for them. He throws stones at them from a safe distance. When he is of a bolder disposition and of the nature of a future V.C., there is nothing he likes better than to pick a fight with one of them by lurching into him as he passes in the street, or by challenging his right even so much as to look at him. Many of us have enjoyed something like these passions in our schooldays. School could not meet school in the innocence of football without our loathing our opponents like a mob of Satans. How we clamoured for verdicts against their play on the least excuse ! How we despised the referee for his leniency to them ! The players on the field seemed to be able to treat each other like human beings, but for us who looked on, especially the youngest of us, the game was a battle between men and monsters.

Such, I believe, is the attitude of the natural schoolboy, though it is modified from place to place, and in the best schools is gradually refined into a really sportsmanlike school-patriotism. But where the code of sportsmanship has not become a sort of second nature, the schoolboy easily grows up into a youth with an aggressive patriotism of the village. It is not in football matches between two Universities, where the code of sportsmanship is strong, but in matches between villages and industrial districts, where the code is in comparison weak, that the referee is occasionally driven

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from the field by the infuriated local patriotism of the onlookers. I know of one little town where it used to be said that no visiting football team dared win a match save at the risk of their skins. It is not that villagers and artisans are predestinately less sportsmanlike than undergraduates. It is simply that they have not had the good fortune to be brought up in that fine and leisurely tradition. Be that as it may, however, it can hardly be questioned that, equally with the undergraduates, they are predestined patriots. They love their school more than any other school, their village more than any other village, their city more than any other city, and, as needs no demonstration in these days, their country more than any other country. No education is necessary to produce this love of school or village or city or country. All that education can do is to give it a noble, instead of an ignoble, direction—to steep it in the tradition of honour and sportsmanship and chivalry.

The child's information about the world should grow up naturally around its own home and place. The Welsh Department wisely emphasises the importance of local history. If history and patriotism stopped there, it would, I agree, be lamentable, and could only lead to a revival of a kind of tribalism. But nothing in the world's experience suggests that a man is a worse patriot for having begun as a passionate lover of his school or his town. As a matter of fact, the lesser patriotism leads to the larger almost of necessity in a modern European nation with a long national history. The great problem is really not how to make men patriots, but how to make men patriots and gentlemen (or, if you like the word better, sportsmen). That is why it is wicked folly to bludgeon

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patriotism into a child's head. Its patriotism will thrive not by bullying, but by knowledge and by noble imagination. Hence the didactic sort of patriotism is unnecessary where the child can be brought through history and nature and literature under the power of a fine tradition. The child with a passion for heroes and the fields of home will be none the better patriot for having to learn by heart "Breathes there a Man," or for listening to a lecture on the flag from a Member of Parliament. One's country ought not to be turned into a golden calf. Rather it is something living and real, without which we seem but guzzlers and aliens, without home, without lineage, without the sun. It is created of the air and the earth, and all those ideals and experiences which transfigure the lives of men. To love it is as natural as to be happy. To serve it is as natural—and as difficult—as to be honest or gentle or agreeable or virtuous. But to schoolmaster small boys and girls into this love and service is almost as superfluous as to hector them into loving a perfect mother, or to lecture them into a taste for honey or wild strawberries.

*The Meaning of Irish Republicanism*

IT has been found possible during the past few months to arrange terms of peace between England and Germany. It has not yet been found possible to arrange terms of peace between England and Ireland. The peace with Germany was in great measure a dictated peace, but it was a peace dictated to an equal nation. The Irish peace schemes of the past few years have broken down because the majority of Irishmen see in them an attempt to dictate peace to a subject nation. The most important event in modern Irish politics has been the spread of the idea of sovereign independence. It would be more accurate to say, the idea of equal independence: for the younger Nationalists have no objection to seeing the independence of their country limited by the League of Nations, provided every other nation surrenders an equal portion of its liberties on behalf of the common liberty of mankind. They take the view, however, that they would be betraying their country if they admitted the right of any other nation to limit their liberties for its own ends. They say that the war put an end to this state of things, and act on the assumption that we are now living under a new dispensation.

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Republicanism, no doubt, has been a force in Irish politics for more than a hundred years—ever since, in fact, the Protestant citizens of Belfast sent a message of enthusiastic sympathy to the French Revolution. The Republican Robert Emmet has, as far as the memory of living man goes back, been the theme of ballad-singers wandering from village to village, and the Republican Wolfe Tone has looked down gallantly from a thousand painted banners even in the most constitutional Home Rule Processions. The Irish, it may be said, have been Republican in their imaginations, even when they have been Home Rule in their politics. At the same time, their two most remarkable and (in their lifetime) most popular leaders have been moderates and advocates of an Imperialist settlement of the Anglo-Irish difficulty. O'Connell, who called for the Repeal of the Union, believed that Ireland should have an independent Parliament equal in powers to the English Parliament, but that the two countries should have the same King. Parnell compromised even on the O'Connell ideal, and was content to accept an Irish Parliament subordinate to Westminster. The Irish people followed both O'Connell and Parnell enthusiastically along the path of compromise. They offered to accept first repeal and then Home Rule as an alternative to the separatist settlement of Emmet and Tone. British statesmen, however, acted on the assumption that, if Repeal and Home Rule were defeated, the alternative was, not separation, but the Union. They saw the O'Connell movement smashed to such a degree that Ireland was compared to a corpse on the dissecting-table. Even then, however, the Irish people did not turn in despair to Unionism. Rather,

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they changed their despair into hope, and poured in their thousands into the lodges of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, better known as the Fenians. The Fenians, in their turn, failed to produce a Garibaldi or a Mazzini, and it was on the ruins of Fenianism that the Parnell compromise was built. By a curious fatality, statesmen at Westminster once more failed to see that an alternative to separation was being offered to them. Gladstone could not even carry the whole of his own party with him in agreeing to the offer made by Parnell on behalf of Ireland to accept a ten-shillings-in-the-pound settlement of her claims. Lord Salisbury stood for the traditional Tory gospel of the servitude of Ireland, and he refused to admit that Ireland was either a nation or the eighth part of a nation. He referred to the Irish as Hottentots, and his nephew, Mr. Arthur Balfour, summed up the logic of the Tory Irish policy in his famous message, "Don't hesitate to shoot." In spite of this, so great an impression had the moral enthusiasm of Gladstone made on them, that the Irish people went on holding the door open for the Home Rule compromise until some time after the outbreak of the war with Germany.

During the first two years of the war about half a million Irishmen flocked from all parts of the globe into the army of the Allies. This was astonishing evidence of the extent to which Irishmen trusted in the liberal professions of England. It became evident before long, however, that there were influences at work in the War Office which thought they saw in the war a last chance of destroying the Irish nation. Mr. Lloyd George has spoken of these influences as "malignant." They made



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war on Irish flags, Irish music, and every branch of Irish patriotism. Meanwhile, the British Cabinet did not even trouble to put the Irish Parliament House in order for the coming of the new era. Irishmen began to suspect that the promise of Home Rule was only "for the duration of the war," and would be withdrawn as soon as its propagandist value was exhausted. The treatment of Irish men and women after the insurrection of 1916 confirmed them in their darkest suspicions. Meanwhile, they saw Home Rule movements turning into Republican movements all over the world—in the German, Austrian, and Russian Empires. Finland abandoned Home Rule for Republicanism. So did Poland. So did Bohemia. Ireland in doing the same has merely followed the tendency of the times. She regards herself as more separate in characteristics and culture from England than Poland from Russia. Her language revival has undoubtedly helped towards this. She is at the present moment more conscious of a distinct national personality than she has been since the ruins of the Cromwellian wars.

Mr. Erskine Childers is the first notable Englishman to suggest that the new Irish situation should be taken seriously. He asks that the choice of their rulers should be left to the Irish people themselves in accordance with the principles of full self-determination. Some writers hold that, for Ulster's sake, the Irish would vote for accepting a Dominion settlement. But it seems to me to be wilful blindness to doubt that Ireland, voting freely, would at present choose a Republic by a large majority of her people. She is as eager to be friends with England as England is to be friends with Ireland ;

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but she holds that this is possible only on the terms on which other European nations are friends with one another—the terms of liberty and equality as well as of fraternity. One thing at least is certain. The two countries can never be reconciled so long as statesmen are more concerned about strategy than about freedom. Freedom is the only begetter of friendship. Strategic egoism can give us nothing but Kaisers and Tsars and Dublin Castles. Unfortunately, the politics of strategy still take precedence of the politics of freedom among the elder statesmen and diplomatists of Europe. Irish Republicanism is in one aspect a protest against this. It is a demand for the establishment, not of a League of Empires, but of an equal League of Nations. If Ireland ever accepts anything less than a Republican settlement,—and no power on earth outside Ireland herself has the right to call on her to do so—she will still claim a seat at the table in the League of Nations. Without this recognition of her nationality, no appeasement is possible.

*On Being an Alien*

IT is surprising that anyone who wishes to be popular ever troubles himself about any other subject except aliens. Dislike of aliens is instinctive with the majority of us. There is not a single race of human beings in existence which has not to make an effort in order to admit the possible equality—especially in the virtues—of the members of another race with its own. We have been afraid of strangers since we were pagans. We are suspicious of strange dogs and strange men. One has heard of savage tribes who were so scared of strangers that they regarded them as sacred. The origin of hospitality may, for all we know, be found in the universal terror of “foreign devils.” It is not many years since we thought the Chinese a funny people because they naively called foreigners “foreign devils.” It is the turn of the Chinese to laugh to-day. Their point of view has come to Europe, and here, too, the foreigner has become a nightmare, a creature with horns and a tail. There is unquestionably something to be said for the Chinese point of view. Foreigners, said Dr. Johnson, are mostly fools. There is quite as much to be said for the opinion that in their incursions into

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other countries they are mostly rascals. We do not need to read many books of travel in order to discover the rascality with which foreigners have behaved in the less well-armed parts of the earth. Cortes and all his men did not stand silent upon a peak in Darien for their health. He was of the heroic build, but his object was to acquire what did not belong to him, and if cruelty to the natives was necessary to the success of his plans he became cruel to the natives. If we could have the opinion of the ancient Gauls on Cæsar they would probably have the same story to tell. Cæsar was a "foreign devil," and it is only by forgetting what must have been the Gallic view that we can be whole-heartedly enthusiastic about him. The Assyrians, the Greeks, and every other conquering people were also "foreign devils" in the eyes of those whom they conquered. The conquering race only becomes tolerable when it ceases to be regarded as foreign and is accepted as resident and native. The Norman conquest of England ceased in the course of time to be a foreign conquest. The Normans settled down, and became more English than the English themselves. They did not, ultimately, rule England from abroad, and in a century or two they were foreigners not in England but in Europe. That is why England has suffered so little from her conquerors. She has made them, almost without exception, Englishmen. She has made herself their home and their chief interest. She has never had to resent their presence as the Italians for long resented the presence of the Austrians or as the Dutch resented the presence of the Spaniards on the ground that they were merely alien top-dogs, immigrant parasites. I remember hearing a

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Frenchman, many years ago, in despair of the way in which the working-classes of this country voted for Conservative politicians, expressing the opinion that the English people had never recovered from the Norman Conquest. His view, however, will not bear examination. If there has not been an anti-Norman movement in England, it is not because the English people were finally crushed at the battle of Hastings ; it is because the Normans, by a happy chance or a happy purpose, ceased to be anti-English. We are only afraid of foreigners if we suspect their interests of not being the same as our own—if we believe they regard us not as their fellows but as their prey. The Normans were at least skilful enough to put themselves at the head of English patriotism and not in opposition to it.

During the war, it can hardly be disputed, the wise foreigner was he who raised his voice somewhat louder than his neighbour's in the utterance of patriotic sentiments. If a man had German connections or a German-looking name, he did well not merely to sing " God save the King," but to bellow it. One should in such circumstances write articles denouncing aliens till one's pen scratches and sputters. One should shout " Intern them all ! " till one's voice hoarsens to a husky whisper. So intense is the vulgar hatred of foreigners that it sounds sweet music even on the lips of a foreigner. Many nations, indeed, have to import a foreigner in order to give full expression to the pomp of their patriotism. France could find within her own borders no Napoleon to spread her *gloire* through the very fingers and toes of Europe. German patriotism only became protuberant in its pride in the works of a Slav

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historian, Treitschke, and an English philosophaster, Houston Chamberlain. We are always ready to give our right hand to a foreigner who will help us to cultivate megalomania. Every nation has a head to be swollen, and no one can do the work quite so skilfully as a foreigner. On the other hand, the poorer classes are so deficient in patriotism that they have not always the educated man's taste for having his head swelled. The foreigner to them is simply the dark-eyed neighbour who is a rival for their job. They have an idea that if there were no foreigners there would be more work, or better still, more money to go round. The foreigners are in their eyes nothing but a swarm of locusts settling down on a country and eating every green thing. It is impossible not to sympathise with their point of view when the foreigner brings with him a low standard of living and wages and cleanliness. Who would not hate the man who would offer to do his job at half the price? The American's terror of the Chinaman, the Englishman's dread of the Russian Jew, are simply a fear, intelligent or unintelligent, of being supplanted in the earning of a living. The natives would feel more comfortable and secure if these pestilent rivals were swept out of existence. Most of us dream of circumstances which will give us perfect comfort and security. We are vaguely resentful of the peril and poverty in which we live. The illusion of a world in which, foreigners having been got rid of, there would be plenty of money to go round, attracts us like the ambitious fancy of a child. In such a mood, foreigners seem to us not only the enemies of our country but our personal enemies.

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On the whole, then, the position of an alien cannot be a very pleasant one, unless one has a good deal of money and a rich vein of transferable patriotism. To be despised as dirty—foreigners are all dirty by classification—even by those who would regard a hot bath as no better than a pneumonia-trap, is the smallest part of the alien's burden. To be an alien is also to be looked on with suspicion as a moral outcast. Aliens are supposed to be capable of all the tricks and treacheries that were once imputed to Jesuits. We surely pay them an unintentional compliment, however, in looking on them as people of superhuman cunning and at the same time of superhuman readiness to sacrifice themselves for the country they have deserted. They may be old men of eighty ; they may have had sons and grandsons fighting in France on the side of the Allies ; their thoughts may not have ranged for half a century beyond the walls of a barber's shop in a back street ; they may care as little for the Kaiser as for Alexander the Great ; they may have abandoned their country with the ease with which thousands of men of all races abandon their country. To the anti-alien, however, they—at least it was so with the Germans in England during the war—are all alike partners in a gigantic conspiracy. "Once a German always a German," we were told, and this apparently means that the German is cursed with an indelible patriotism above men of all other nations even to the third or fourth generation. Not only this, but to have been a German subject against one's will leaves one, it seems, with a German taint ; and so we note the paradox that while Mr. Ronald MacNeill, M.P., the famous loyalist, was anxious to shed blood in order to free



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Alsations from German rule, meanwhile he was equally eager to put Alsations into English internment camps. On the whole, if one were a member of an oppressed nationality, one would prefer a slightly less demonstrative friend than Mr. MacNeill. At the same time, Mr. MacNeill was logical. He had the good sense to realise that, if the Germans had agents in England, the latter were not likely to be Germans. They were far more likely to be neutrals. "If we are to intern anybody," said an embittered Englishman to me at the time, "we should begin with the neutrals; and, if we do not find our suspicions cooling down as a result of this, we may go a step further and intern members of the Allied nations. If even then we still suffer from nightmares of espionage, we had better look for victims nearer home and intern our own people. When once we have the whole human race behind barbed wire, we ought to be able to sleep the sleep of the just." And nothing short of this was the logic of the internment policy, as it was advocated by the extremists. They were willing to do an immense wrong in order to eliminate a little risk. Every reasonable man knows it is impossible entirely to eliminate risk. Herod made a courageous attempt, but even he failed. It is better to run a small risk than to be cruel or mean or cowardly. There is a risk in allowing one's son to grow to manhood; there have been such things as parricides. It may be admitted that espionage is a commoner crime than parricide, but the proper way to counter it is by an efficient secret service, and not by running campaigns against aliens in sensational papers. These merely rekindle the old anti-foreign feeling which is already

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vehement enough in most of us, and which must be tamed into moderation if the world is to be civilised. The world can never be made one place so long as men continue to hate foreigners simply because they are foreigners. I remember, during the war, hearing a lady, who considered herself rather patriotic, denouncing in turn the French, the Belgians, the Welsh, the Irish, the Russians, and the Americans. The only people in whom she had any faith were the English, and at least half of these she regarded as traitors. She had only one foreign hero—Sir Edward Carson. I fancy she looked on the war as a second-rate war, because there were so many foreigners fighting on the same side as England. Her ideal war, no doubt, would be a war in which England and Sir Edward Carson would march out against the rest of the human race and scatter it with the jaw-bone of the editor of the *Morning Post*.

*Plots as an Aid to Law and Order*

**T**HERE is room for a history of plots. Few things have exercised a greater influence on the fortunes of men. Such a history would be interesting, not only on account of its many sensational anecdotes, but for the light it would throw on human psychology. It would make three things fairly clear—first, that, in spite of the incredulous, plots do exist; second, that where our prejudices are roused, most of us are ready to believe in a plot, whether it exists or not; and third, that when the public is convinced of the existence of a dangerous plot, it is liable to attacks of suspicion-mania, which lead it to rejoice in the punishment of the innocent equally with the guilty. As for those who are incredulous about plots in general, they shut their eyes to the facts almost deliberately. Dreading the things of which human beings are capable when under the influence of plot-mania, and regarding the believers in plots as no less a peril to society than the plotters themselves, they prefer to ignore the conspiratorial side of human nature or, at least, to leave it to the unimaginative sort of novelists. As ninety-nine plots in a hundred miscarry, and as, on the lowest computa-

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tion, fifty per cent of them are bogus, this policy has much to be said for it. It has its risks, however. Some plots have even succeeded. If Julius Cæsar had been less of a sceptic about plots, he might have lived to be crowned. Had it not been for plots, Italy would not now be a nation, and the Great War would probably never have broken out. To ignore such grim masters of events may make for comfort, but one cannot rewrite history merely in order to help oneself to be comfortable. So long as human beings exist, we may as well recognise the probability that some of them will be plotting. The under dogs will be plotting against the upper dogs, and the upper dogs will be plotting against the under dogs. Many of the plots will be good, and many will be evil. All we can be sure of is that most of them will fail.

If incredulity with regard to plots is foolish, however, credulity is a great deal worse. Some of the most terrible crimes in history have been the result of too simple faith in the existence of a plot. Nero believed, or led others to believe, that it was Christian conspirators who had set fire to Rome. One of the consequences of this suspicious young music-hall performer's error was that shortly afterwards Christians, clothed in the skins of wild animals, were being thrown to the dogs to be torn in pieces, or were crucified, or burnt alive in shirts of pitch. Lest some scholar should refuse to believe, however, that it was the story of a plot that led to Nero's persecution of the Christians, it will be useful to recall one or two other historical crimes that had their origin in a tale of a conspiracy. When in 1572 Catherine de Medici decided on the necessity of the Massacre of

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St. Bartholomew, she had to win the consent of the young king. This she did by inventing a Protestant plot. "She convinced him first of the existence of a Huguenot plot," says the historian. Now, the Huguenots had been engaged in many plots in their time: most people were in those days. But of the particular plot which was used to incite Charles IX to give the order for the butchery of the French Protestants no evidence has ever been discovered. "The attitude of the Court . . . was cynical in the extreme. To England they spoke of a diabolical plot against the Crown nipped in the bud by the massacre: to the Pope and the King of Spain they paraded the massacre as a deliberate and long-planned act of policy." The next greatest crime in the history of France, the September Massacres of 1792, was also associated with tales of a terrible plot. On the eve of the butchery "the whole of Paris was talking of the plots concocted in the prisons." That there were Royalist conspiracies in existence at the time it would be foolish to doubt. One would think, however, that the conspirators who were under lock and key were scarcely worth being afraid of to the point of murder. At the rumour of a plot, unhappily, men become insane. They rush not only to conclusions, but to wild deeds.

And the case against over-credulity in regard to plots is almost as strong if we leave French and come to English history. Thomas Cromwell, that model of ruthlessness, won his sinister power over Henry VIII—power which led to the murder of so many noble Englishmen, Sir Thomas More among them—by harping on the plot theme. Henry VIII, says J. R. Green, "was fearless of open danger, but tremulously sensitive to the

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slightest breath of hidden disloyalty. It was on this inner dread that Cromwell based the fabric of his power. . . . The air was thick with tales of plots and conspiracies, and with the detection and suppression of each Cromwell tightened his hold on the King." Even if we take it for granted that many of the plots were genuine, we may question whether the remedy was not worse than the disease. Cromwell with his keen scent for plots reduced England to a state of nervous terror such as she has seldom known. Men in England at the time felt, declared Erasmus, "as if a scorpion lay sleeping under every stone."

The great plot period in English history, however, is not the period of Thomas Cromwell, but the period of Titus Oates. Titus Oates lives in history as the man who made the invention of plots a branch of English industry. One has only to look at the face of the man, with its long, evil chin, to see what a scoundrel he was. But the English Protestants of his day wanted Popish plots, and Titus Oates provided them with what they wanted. That is sufficient to explain their trust in him. Intoxicated by his grisly tales, they watched with enthusiasm the procession of his innocent victims on their way to the gallows. Perhaps we, too, had we been living in Oates's day, would have believed in his narrative. There had, it was undeniable, been a secret meeting of the Jesuits in London. Further, the magistrate to whom Oates first told his story of the plot was soon afterwards found murdered by someone unknown. Apart from these suspicious incidents, Oates had plenty of witnesses to swear to the truth of his story. One witness swore that an army of thirty thousand men,

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disguised as pilgrims, were under orders to gather at Corunna and invade Wales. Another had been promised canonisation and five hundred pounds to murder the King. Oates himself declared that he had once stood behind a door and listened while the Queen confessed her willingness to have the King murdered. There has seldom been a better-substantiated story of a plot. Few juries could have resisted such overwhelming evidence. Oates, if we may judge him by the law of supply and demand, had done well. He and his market had found each other. He was bound to be followed by other enterprising merchants with the same wares. Macaulay, referring to the orgy of plots that followed the success of Oates's inventions, has summed up the history of the plot-mongers in wise and witty sentences that should be a lasting warning against excessive credulity in regard to such things. He says :

Every person well read in history must have observed that depravity has its temporary modes, which come in and go out like modes of dress and upholstery. It may be doubted whether, in our country, any man ever, before the year 1678, invented and related on oath a circumstantial history, altogether fictitious, of a treasonable plot, for the purpose of making himself important by destroying men who had given him no provocation. But in the year 1678 this execrable crime became the fashion, and continued to be so during the twenty years which followed. Preachers designated it as our peculiar national sin, and prophesied that it would draw on us some awful national judgment. . . . Till the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament, Popish plots were the chief manufacture. Then, during seven years, Whig plots were the only



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plots that paid. After the Revolution, Jacobite plots came in.

English politics only became rational, indeed, during the Premiership of Sir Robert Walpole, who was either too lazy or too tolerant to take any notice of the sensational tales (many of them, no doubt, true) of Jacobite plottings on the part of his opponents. As late as 1720, however, when Swift wrote an anonymous pamphlet urging the Irish people to use their own manufactures, the Chief Justice of Ireland was still so much under the plot obsession that he declared it was the object of the author to bring in the Pretender.

Plots did not come into their own again in England until the time of the French Revolution, when Pitt (to the sorrow of his biographers) wasted a great deal of his energy in suppressing revolutionary plots, real or imaginary. Dr. J. Holland Rose, in *William Pitt and the Great War*, has little to say in favour of Pitt's anti-plot policy. Of the Corresponding Societies he writes : " I have found no proof that either at Norwich or in London these societies used illegal methods. The seditious placards posted up at Norwich may have been the work of some fanatic or *agent provocateur*." The members of the London Society evidently suspected the presence of *agents provocateurs* among them, as at their meetings they had a card hung above the chairman's head, bearing the ever-wise words, " Beware of Orators." The plots, however, were in some places a success so far as the authorities were concerned. In Scotland the infamous Braxfield acted on the principle that a man accused of being concerned in a plot was

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guilty without need of further evidence. He is reported on one occasion to have greeted a member of one of his packed juries with the words: "Come awa', Maister Horner, come awa', and help us to hang one o' thae daamed scoondrels." That is merely a Scottish expression of the old spirit of Thomas Cromwell, whose papers were full of brief jottings on the model of: "Item, the Abbot of Reading to be sent down to be tried and executed at Reading." "To be tried and executed" is a good phrase. It at once delights and horrifies us because it reveals one of the terrible secrets of human nature. Few of us are so candid as Thomas Cromwell. If we were, thousands of us would confess that for us, too, an accusation of conspiracy is evidence of the accused person's guilt. At the same time, it is to the credit of human nature that at the end of the eighteenth century magistrates and juries refused for the most part to follow Pitt in his enthusiasm for discovering plots. Even the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act did not bring about the conviction of Horne Tooke and his friends. The chief result of the trials and acquittals was an increase in the membership and influence of the chief organisation attacked.

During the nineteenth century one of the most curious of plots was the conspiracy of some Orangemen to put the Duke of Cumberland on the throne instead of Queen Victoria. But the conspiracies that seemed most dangerous to the British authorities were undoubtedly Trade Unionism and Irish Nationalism. Even to-day the Trade Unionist is suspected in many quarters as a conspirator. For a long time the law regarded him as such. As for Irish Nationalists, did not even a great

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and averagely sane newspaper like the *Times* publish the Pigott forgery, accusing Parnell of complicity in a murder-plot? In Ulster at the present day, we are told, tens of thousands of people believe in the existence of a permanent Popish plot, if not to cut their throats, at least to steal their farms, their houses, and their goods. The whisper of the existence of such a plot is of more effect in the politics of Ulster than a world of evidence. Hence, seeing the influence of such stories, I think it behoves Governments as well as peoples to examine any alleged plot as closely as though it were an alien coming ashore at Newhaven. They should insist on knowing in regard to every plot the characters of the witnesses for it, the nature of the evidence, and on making sure that none but persons against whom the evidence is indisputable shall be dragged in under a general accusation of conspiracy. The sane attitude to adopt in regard to plots is not to disbelieve in their existence off-hand, but to demand the production of their credentials. History warns us that we must never accept a plot on trust. If we did, statesmen would be at the mercy of every Titus Oates and Pigott who could invent a sensational story in tune with the prejudices of the hour.

## XXVII

### *The Duty of Continuing to Hate the Germans*

MORALISTS have a way of laying upon us heavier burdens than we can bear. They wish to turn us into iron figures of duty—to make us grimmer and more forbidding than human beings were ever meant to be. They lead us up to the barren face of a cliff and say to us: “There is your duty. Climb that. Avoid alcohol. Eat only as much as is necessary to keep you alive. Thrust aside your wife and weeping children, as Regulus did. Get up at six and have a cold bath. Despise the temptations alike of good nature and self-interest. Care for nothing but your purpose. Life is a battlefield, and on the battlefield it is better to be a tank than a char-à-banc. Be hard. Pity is for milksops.” These bitter imperatives are not an invention of our own time. They have risen in every age to perturb the weak-willed race of men. Milder schools of morality have also appeared, inquiring whether, after all, the ideal of duty may not in some way be reconciled with human happiness. But such inquiries have been reprimanded as feebleness. The extreme Stoic, the extreme Calvinist, and all the

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preachers and prophets of iron have no space in their system for the indulgence of human nature. Human nature is the serpent whose head it is man's task to crush under his heel. It is, indeed, a whole brood of serpents. As one climbs the steep hill of duty, one is treading on them at every step.

War, it has often been said during recent years, is a stern and ennobling school. It is the moralist's friend. It adds greatly to the number of our duties and hunts the young out of their feather beds. The duties are, for the most part, unpleasant. They include, as someone has said, killing people to whom one has not been introduced, walking up and down outside gasworks during the small hours of the morning, hating one's enemies, giving up China tea, paying half-as-much again on the railways, eating war-bacon, losing one's temper—but the list is practically endless. Those I have named are enough to enable anyone to realise how it comes about that war produces an atmosphere in which a Bishop can feel more at home than in his palace. In time of peace we are an easy-going race whose conduct is regulated by a baker's dozen of "Don'ts." We have the Ten Commandments, more or less, and to them we add a few mild injunctions such as "Do not lean out of the train when it is in motion," "Do not throw bottles, etc., on to the line." But so timid, so tentative are these formulæ for the duties of a modern man that they scarcely deserve the name of morality. They are not stimulating as true morality is. We can obey them without an effort. Effort, however, is of the essence of morality. Morality has even been defined as doing what one doesn't like. The definition is not entirely satis-

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factory, but undoubtedly it covers the creed of many Stoics and Calvinists. The moral enthusiasm of a number of people during the war was greatly enhanced by the opportunity it gave them of compelling other people to do what they didn't like. They gloried in spreading self-denial for its own sake, quite apart from the question whether it was needed to win the war. To stop young men from playing football, to shut the British Museum, even to put an end to summer holidays at the seaside—hardly a day passed that did not give some morality-intoxicated man the opportunity to preach some new form of compulsory self-denial. Duties spread like an epidemic. The man who invented a new one was generally felt to be one who deserved well of his country. Life for each of us became a round of labours more numerous and hardly less formidable than the labours of Hercules. It was impossible, in presence of such a challenge to effort, for one's moral muscle to remain flabby. It required an effort to eat margarine ; it required an effort to drink Government beer ; it required an effort to eat stewed rhubarb without sugar ; it required an effort to hate the proprietor of the ham-and-beef shop at the corner. Our very efforts were our salvation, however. We became moral prodigies. How it came about, on the other hand, that the Germans, who ate and drank still more unpalatable things and who put so much more effort than their enemies did into hating quite innocent people, were ultimately beaten will always be one of the puzzles of history.

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The most urgent problem for which the moralist has now to find a solution, however, is how to carry on into peace the moral energies of war. Peace does not offer

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the same opportunities as war for doing things we don't like. We are not even allowed to kill people except in a limited area to which only a selected number of men are admitted. The Russians are allowed—they are even encouraged, it is said—to kill each other; but the western European is allowed to kill hardly anybody. Even those people who derived a certain moral stimulus from promenading on wet, dark nights in the neighbourhood of gasworks are, I am told, no longer encouraged. If they attempted to continue the practice, in all probability they would be driven off by the police as suspicious characters. The number of unpleasant duties is fast shrinking. One has no longer a chance of eating absolutely loathsome bacon. Tea that is utterly vile is now almost unobtainable. Even the beer seems to have improved: at least, there is more of it. It is as though someone had run away with the dumb-bells and the Indian clubs and the ladder and the rope and the parallel bars and the trapeze and the gloves and the vaulting horse from our moral gymnasium. What is there left to exercise with? It seems for the moment as though there is nothing for us to do but sit down and grow flabby again. Luckily, when we look closer, we find that the war has not stripped our gymnasium entirely naked. We have still a number of unpleasant duties left upon which we may practise our virtues. We shall still be able to pay a huge income-tax and to pay more for railway travel, coal and, indeed, practically everything. The worst of it is, our mood as we do these things is necessarily one of acquiescence rather than of enthusiasm, and without enthusiasm we cannot scale the peaks of virtue. War morality is morality touched



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with emotion. Can we hope to inherit this now that peace has brought us relaxation? The only people who have pointed out a way of doing so, so far as one can see, are those who tell us that we must go on hating the Germans. This is a task sufficiently unpleasant to be admitted into the strictest category of duties, and its appeal is as emotional as could be desired.

There are cynics who say it is an easy thing to hate Germans. The history of the war refutes them. The war neither began nor ended in hatred. In the course of it, British and German soldiers even spent a merry Christmas together till the authorities gave strict orders that such a thing must never happen again. Man is a social animal, with an instinct to fraternise with those with whom he comes in contact. He enjoys, besides, a great variety of moods—sentimental, critical, hostile, pitiful, vindictive, tolerant, cruel, kind. His hatreds last no longer than his grand passions. He does not like to live at such high tension. He leaves such exhausting emotions to the heroes of tragedies. All he himself asks is a little comfort, a little friendly conversation, and to be allowed to live at peace.

Everybody enjoys an occasional outburst of hatred. To-day one may hate one's grocer; to-morrow, it will be the cook; the day after, it will be the young man who jostles one getting on to the bus. Life finds room for a good many small hatreds of this kind. They last hardly longer than a cigarette or a sentimental song, and their effect is no more serious. Suppose, however, the Archbishop of Canterbury or some other moralist were to call on you and assure you that it was your duty to go on hating the cook for ever and ever—that you must hate

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her sitting and hate her standing, hate her by night and hate her by day, hate her in the kitchen and hate her in the street, hate her at breakfast, lunch, and supper, hate her living and hate her dead—you would feel that he had let you in for the most terrible punishment. To have to hate the same person all the time is to have an eagle devouring your liver while you are still alive. Hatred is tolerable only if it can find a constant variety of objects. Otherwise, it becomes a monomania, a fixed idea. There could be no sterner discipline for the human spirit than its subjection to such a monomania. Men have often submitted themselves to temporary horrors for ideal ends. But few men submit themselves to lifelong horrors even in the name of an ideal. The breaking-point comes even with the bravest, and the brain mercifully gives way. And, if it is difficult to go on hating all your life a cook whom you have seen, it is far more difficult to go on hating a whole people whom you practically do not know. A few of the more Herculean spirits among the members of defeated nations have attempted to do this, but, if any of them ever succeeded, it was only by dint of remaining constantly in a state of war. Hannibal was vowed to hatred of Rome from his boyhood. Did even he keep his vow? I doubt it, remembering his treatment of the Roman general, Marcellus. Like the rest of us, he was under the curse of fickleness and collapsed into magnanimity. Satan in *Paradise Lost* is the only example of immortal hate without compromise that one can remember, and we cannot all be Satans. Our good-humour betrays us, or our common-sense, or some other of the drab regiment of the virtues. I met a British soldier the other day buying

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chocolate and coffee beans to take out to the Germans in whose house he was billeted in Cologne. Most men are like that. We put pleasure before duty, and we abandon the loftiest purpose in order to perform some childish act of kindness. If Cabinet Ministers were not made of sterner stuff, it is quite conceivable that the women and children of Germany would have been given something to eat immediately after the armistice. The thought of a child holding out its thin arms and wailing in hunger, so far from causing most of us pleasure, gives us just the tiniest stab at the heart. What recreants we are—flabby recreants ! We are no good at hating.

None the less, duty must be done even at the cost of your finer feelings. It must be done, even at the cost of your pockets. And you cannot expect to go on hating the Germans without your pockets suffering. Obviously you cannot trade with people you deeply loathe, and so you are bound to lose one of the great markets of the world to those less morally advanced nations who are willing to traffic with Germans. Your loss will fortunately be France's and America's gain. I have no wish to criticise those great nations, but it seems only too clear that in every country except England the passion of self-interest is stronger than the passion of hate. What other nation besides England will willingly impoverish itself for the sake of an abstract principle ? Ultimately, it may mean isolation, for, if you boycott the Germans, you may in the end have to boycott also all the nations that refuse to boycott the Germans. It would be intolerable to have German goods bought by Frenchmen and then sent on to you disguised as French wares, at an increased price. Yet German goods and raw

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materials are sure to reach you, if anybody at all is allowed to buy them. Hence, you must be prepared to make war on the rest of the earth in defence of your great principle of hate. This will mean the end of the League of Nations and an even more terrible war than the last. You will be bombed and gassed and torpedoed to a degree that will cause journalists to speak of Armageddon. You may well rejoice in such a war, however : it will put you nationally to the test. When all the other nations join in bombing and bombarding you your hatred of Germany will but burn the brighter. If you must perish fighting an embattled universe, you can go down proudly flying the anti-German flag. Towards your new enemies you will have no feelings of hatred. To expend hatred on anybody but Germans would be a desertion of principle. . . . When one thinks how easy it would be for the vast majority of Englishmen to forget all this and to sink back into the slough of decent humanity, all one can say is, "Thank God for Mr. W. M. Hughes !"

## XXVIII

### *Utopia*

WHEN the Speaker of the House of Commons on one occasion described the idea of a League of Nations as "Utopian," he expressed the hope that he would not be thought to be carping. I am afraid it is not the custom to use the word "Utopian" except in a disparaging sense. To say that a thing is Utopian means that one is willing to praise it only if one is allowed to pass by on the other side. Men will assent to almost any principle provided it is kept safely out of reach in Utopia. At that distance, they will permit themselves to be charmed by the most fantastic dreams of the anarchistic communists. Plato cannot shock them while he remains in the clouds. William Morris, though he would seem more terrible than a Bolshevik if he had the power to do what he dreamed, seems as innocent as the author of *Jessica's First Prayer* so long as he puts his Utopia not into practice but only into prose. We admire Utopia as the most far-away of foreign countries. It is prettier and more incredible than Japan, and we would dread being subjected to it as we would dread being subjected to Japan. We prefer to think of it as an invention of card-

## Utopia

board and fairy-lights. It is a toy, not a destination. We are willing to believe in it only on the understanding that it is not true. Few men have taken out naturalisation papers as citizens of Utopia. The average man would rather be himself than anybody else, however perfect ; and he is equally reluctant to see his country, or his world, losing its identity to be reborn into vacuous perfection. For to the average imagination vacuousness is an essential quality of perfection. The perfect man is not an individual but a type. The Christian religion alone has achieved the miracle of making him an individual. The explanation, perhaps, is that we can realise human individuality in terms of suffering, though we more usually do so in terms of limitations of mind and character. Suffering is the tragic creator of personality. The perfect man of the Stoics, serenely enthroned above suffering, is by comparison with the perfect man of the Christians an abstraction, and many people find him as chill as a statue. He, more conceivably than an ordinary human being, might be turned out by a machine. Our attitude to the perfect State is much the same as to the perfect man. We shudder at its death-like stillness. It warms the heart no more than the contemplation of a geometrical figure. Nor do the Utopia-builders ever think of showing their perfect State as a scene of tragic suffering and so making it as human as a real country. They are disinclined to allow it faults either of character or circumstance. It is a place as happy as a prig—as disgustingly calm and superior to frail humanity as the parents in *The Fair-child Family*. The next author who wishes to write an account of Utopia should try the experiment of telling

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the story as a tragedy instead of as a fairy-tale in which everybody lives happily ever afterwards. By some curious law of human nature, the imagination is more easily moved by tragic than by prosperous examples. The example of Belgium holding the gap against Germany at the cost of immeasurable ruin did more to give Europe a great ideal in the early days of the war than the happiness of the Swiss Republic had done during the previous half-century. Sympathy, pity, love—these are begotten by the spectacle of suffering. Happiness—at least, the happiness which is largely comfort—has no progeny comparable to this.

It is not the happiness of the Utopians that finally frightens us, however, but their goodness. Most of us would like, or think we should like, the world to be improved ; but we feel that we would break down under the strain of trying to live up to the standards of Utopia. Stripped of our sins, we should feel naked, indecent, unnatural. We are in doubt if we can adapt ourselves to those virtuous surroundings without ceasing to be ourselves. We have no desire to give up our richly-coloured identities in order to become walking theories—even if they should be the very best theories. There are many people nowadays who hate the idea of immortality because it would mean living for ever in Utopia. They have almost as great a horror of Heaven as their ancestors had of Hell. They dread it as a vast mutual improvement society in which a procession of a million million souls would walk about from noon to eternal noon, all bent on doing each other good. Thoreau was heretical in many respects, but he was an average man in his desire, when he saw anyone who wished to do him good, to run



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away. People, I fancy, make a mistake in thinking that Heaven or Utopia is the sort of place where everybody is determined to do one good. That is not Heaven but Purgatory. Utopia is as free from the tyranny of the sermon as a summer seashore crowded with children. The child might as reasonably be afraid of its games as the grown-up man of Utopia. A man may well think nervously of the prospect of being plunged into Utopia while he is still adapted to life in twentieth-century Clapham. He would, in that event, be as queerly out of his element as Gulliver was among the Houyhnhnms. He may take comfort, however, from the reflection that Utopia is a country which it is impossible for anyone not fully adapted to Utopian conditions to enter. We must be Utopians before we can get into Utopia. The worst of it is that the reverse proposition is equally true : we must get into Utopia before we can be Utopians. This may seem to be a mere playing with paradoxes and contradictions with no purpose save to announce human helplessness. As a matter of fact, there is a good deal of comfort to be got out of the contradictions. They remind us that Utopia cannot become our home save by an act of our own will, and that our transition to it is bound to be an affair of mutual adaptations, like the transition from childhood to middle age. There is as much reason for a Negro to shrink from the life of an English peer as for an English peer to shrink from the life of a Utopian. The English peer, there is some reason to believe, represents a type of man that has advanced from a much lower level than that of the Negro. His present existence, I have no doubt, would seem unbelievably Utopian to the limp and hungry

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of making war? I have a terrible conviction that if the human race in peace had ever been willing to undergo half the sacrifices—even the money sacrifices—which it was willing to undergo in time of war, we should have had Utopia painted on the map of the world long ago.

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